WORLD REVIEW

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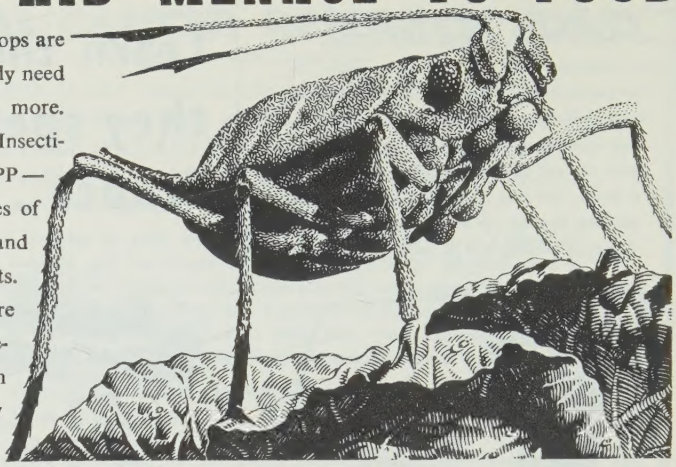

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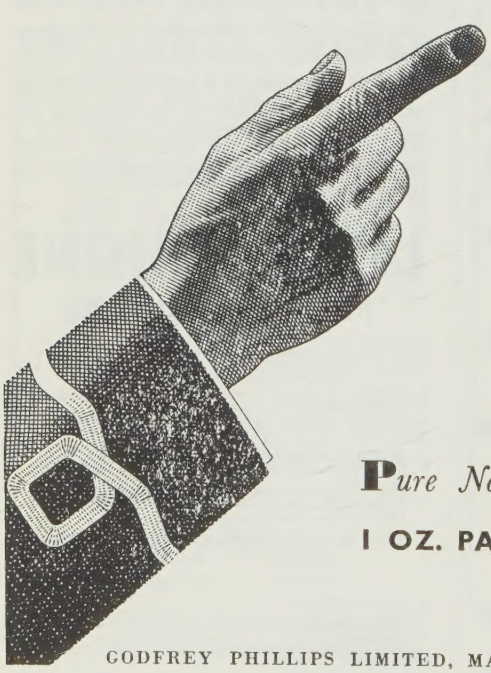

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Editorial

THE WAY OF THE WORLD—descends more and more sharply from the pinnacle of western prosperity to the unpeaceful vale of eastern poverty. And in no way is this more true than in the matter of food. While United States farmers are planning what to do with their surplus bread grains, Mr. Tom Williams bewails a crisis in the four-year plan for agricultural expansion at home. And why? Because, apparently, we are 440,000 acres short of our wheat target and three per cent short on home grown coarse grains. Livestock, the main rung of the long-term expansion ladder, continues to show a healthy increase. But this, Mr. Williams fears, means that it is outstripping our ability to feed.

If this is a crisis—and crisis is a strong and rather over-worked word—it lies, not so much in a shortage of twenty-two million dollars' worth of wheat, as in a marked recession from that healthy confidence and enthusiasm which produced excellent results in the first year of the plan.

Our refusal to ask for a single one of the 158 million Marshall Aid dollars allocated to Western Europe for animal feeding stuffs, the muddle made by the Food Minister over vegetable imports, and tardiness in dealing with the pressing problem of increased production from marginal and hill farms, are the main reasons for this recession. The farmer, increasingly, sees Mr. Williams as fighting a losing battle with his Cabinet colleagues. He sees Mr. Strachey as the evil genius of British food policy and the restraining hand of Sir Stafford Cripps as a sharp-edged thunder cloud in the sky of guaranteed prices and markets.

The Government cannot have it both ways. Either agriculture is sufficiently important in our economy to deserve a small cut off the joint of dollar raw materials, or it is far less vital than Mr. Williams pretends. If the agricultural expansion programme is to succeed, the Government must convince the farmer that the whole Cabinet, and not merely the Minister of Agriculture, is behind him.

It must stop harrying the efficient farmer while increasing pressure on the indolent-from-choice. It must co-operate with the producers in evolving a sensible marketing scheme for fruit and vegetables, and it must tackle as a matter of urgency the encouragement and advice needed to increase the productivity of marginal and hill lands.

This is so because, whatever is being done at Washington and after, the need will remain —the need to produce from the land of Britain every particle of food of which her acres are capable. Agriculture cannot be switched on and off like the machinery of a factory. The foundations must be laid now, and the progress must be steady and uninterrupted, without violent changes of policy. In wartime we pursued necessity without much regard to the effect on long-term productivity. Now we must build more securely upon a balanced plan of cropping and livestock production, having regard to the exacting rules of good husbandry and the day-to-day demands of stock that can live and breed only if it is fed.

LACK OF LEADERSHIP

Important as it is, being the most direct means of lessening the trade gap, home food production is but one aspect of the general economic problem, and the latter cannot be solved by formulas worked out by governments. They can produce 'plans', 'agreements', 'targets', etc., to their heart's content, but, in a democracy, unless the *individuals* who compose it are prepared to support these measures, through a clear idea of their necessity, results will not be achieved. In this respect the British people have been misled and muddled through the failure of their leaders to face up to the realities of the situation in time. The dollar crisis is represented by the Left-wing as being the responsibility of America alone, with no relation to domestic policy. The T.U.C. and certain Government spokesmen claim that Socialist policy is responsible for full employment, whilst other Government spokesmen admit that, without free aid from capitalist America, there would have been up to two million unemployed. Fuel, convertibility, and dollar crises suddenly descend unheralded between bouts of optimistic forecasts of the country's recovery. Hours of work are reduced, yet lower costs and more productivity are called for. Business men are urged to become 'merchant adventurers' and save their country by Mr. Wilson, whilst Mr. Bevan preaches class hatred. They are urged to make their factories more efficient, whilst penal taxation hampers them from renewing obsolescent plant. Small wonder that, amidst such a welter of contradictions, a sense of *urgency* and *personal responsibility* is lacking, that unofficial strikes become the order of the day, and that output per man-hour in a wide field is below pre-war. The wonder is that Britain has achieved so much to be proud of.

Whilst it would be wholly unjust to pin all the responsibility for our present economic difficulties on the present Government (the disequilibrium between the dollar and sterling blocs would have manifested itself in some form at some time, whatever government had been in power), yet, had the *truth* of our inevitable post-war situation been *consistently* told over the past years, and had ideology been sacrificed to hard facts, we should be in a better position to carry out the moral obligation arising from the Washington talks, to reduce export prices and to lay a permanent foundation for national solvency. Devaluation by itself can only postpone the problem.

ABOUT OURSELVES

Ignazio Silone, the author of the celebrated novel, *Fontamara*, has been silent for a long time—at any rate in the literary field. It is, therefore, with a special sense of pleasure that we now print his new article with its fine mixture of creative writing and 'reportage'. Fontamara is a mythical town, though often identified with Pescina, Silone's native village, which was destroyed by an earthquake in which his mother and two brothers were killed. But, imagined or real, Fontamara has come to stay, in order to go on telling the story of the old peasant who would not resign himself to injustice or contempt. Our article has been translated from the Italian by Darina Silone, and is published here by arrangement with UNESCO.

Our 'Profiles' this month are devoted to the National Organisers of the four political parties, now getting ready for the General Election. (The Communists, as usual, profit out of all proportion to their strength.) But it was no easy matter penetrating the heavy curtain of secrecy that surrounds the political designs, and Organisers obviously do not seem to like the light of publicity. However, once it was possible to enter into their presence, they turned out to be quite human, after all, and the results of our investigation are printed here.

Those who have read Stephen Spender's article on W. H. Auden at Oxford, in our August number, will be interested to know that William Saroyan, whose latest short story appears here, was prompted to sit down and write 'a similar piece', entitled 'William Saroyan at Longfellow High', on reading Mr. Spender's article. This superb piece of satire, which Mr. Saroyan has just sent us, will appear in an early issue.

IGNAZIO SILONE

RETURN TO FONTAMARA

. . . and suddenly, Fontamara, a village that was not to be found on any map, became the subject of much discussion, and a symbol for a great part of Italy. . . .

THE moment I received the parish priest's letter, I decided to go. And for reasons of my own, I chose to take the night train. A friend in whom I had confided offered to drive me there; but I refused, with murmured pretexts and vague, improvised excuses.

In the end, to silence him, I said: 'You know, when I set out from there, twenty-five years ago, I took the train. So you ought to understand.'

'But the line has been badly damaged by the war,' he insisted. 'Many of the bridges are makeshift wooden ones; the train crawls at a snail's pace; you'll be travelling all night.'

'All the better,' said I, somewhat annoyed.

All night long I kept my face close to the window of the railway carriage. Through the window I could see, opening up before me, a landscape stamped indelibly on my memory, stony little fields and dark, barren mountains with no trace of human habitation. I saw deserted little stations appearing and disappearing, barred doors and shuttered windows, tumbledown houses, crumbling walls, ruins everywhere. From the acrid smell of the men and women huddled near me in the darkness of the railway carriage, with their bundles, suitcases, boxes and sacks crammed with purchases made in the town, I could guess their peasant origin. The faces of some, as they slept in the early dawn, wore a look of death; others had the terrified grimace of thieves caught red-handed; others again had the haggard faces of the incestuous, the patricide or those who murder their wives. But as the ticket-collector's authoritative tones were heard, they shook themselves and quickly resumed the appearance of impenetrable reserve habitual to their waking hours.

In the corridor, while trying to pick my way between the prostrate forms of my fellow-travellers and the barricade of sacks, I heard someone calling me.

'Hello, there,' he shouted, 'what the devil are you doing on this train? Going back to your Fontamara?'

'I'm doing just like everyone else,' I answered with some irritation, 'I'm travelling.'

The voice drew nearer.

'But where is it exactly, this Fontamara of yours?' he insisted in a conspiratorial tone. 'Which of our villages is it, in your imagination? Aielli? Ortona? Lecce?'

'That's my secret,' said I, jumping out at the next stop.

'Where's your bag?' shouted the other from the window. 'Have you forgotten it?'

'Haven't got one,' I answered. 'Go to the devil.'

I had brought no luggage. It would, I felt, have been really absurd for me to arrive there with suitcases, as though I were a tourist or a commercial traveller. It was twenty-five years since I had set off from this station, and I had carried no suitcases that time either. I had left like a thief, by night, and had never dreamt that so many years would pass before I could return. Lazzaro, the frog-catcher, had insisted on seeing me off. He was an old Socialist and a native of the place.

'Don't come,' I had said to him. 'The *carabinieri* might recognise you and hold it against you. Don't give me cause for remorse.'

'I'll pretend that I just happened to be at the station,' he answered. 'You'll see, I'll not as much as say a word to you.'

And so, with his daughter and his donkey, he came down the valley and over to the station. But of course we ended up by talking to each other.

'Go far away and forget this land of sorrow,' he said to me. 'It's well for you that you're only a boy and have time to forget.'

'Lazzaro,' I answered, 'I swear to you that I'll never forget.'

'You'll forget.' he repeated vehemently. 'You'll finish your studies, you'll get on in the world, and of course you'll forget. You'll see how easy it will be.'

'Lazzaro,' said I, 'why quarrel just at the moment of parting? I swear to you, Lazzaro, I'll never forget.'

'I don't want to quarrel,' he assured me. 'That's the last thing I'd want. But you'll see, that's how it will be. You too will get on in the world and you'll forget. Believe me, I'm old—I could be your grandfather—and I know life better than you.'

I WENT on protesting, with tears in my eyes, and making an effort not to burst into sobs; and even Laurina, Lazzaro's daughter, begged her father to stop, or to talk of something else.

'Maybe it's the last time you'll ever be talking to each other,' said Laurina. 'Maybe you'll never see each other again, and yet you're quarrelling.'

'I don't want to quarrel,' said the old man, humbly and apologetically. 'That's the last thing I'd want, especially just now, when we have to part. What I was saying is only natural, and, after all, what's natural is right. You'll settle down, I was saying, you'll get on in the world, and you'll forget.'

His daughter, Laurina, turned to me in great distress.

'You've got to understand him,' she said. 'The fact is, he has a great love for you; you have no idea how much he loves you; you have no idea of the way he talks about you when you're not there. He has a greater love for you than he has for me, his daughter.'

'Maybe that's so,' said the old man, nodding assent to her, 'indeed, that's how it is. But what am I? A poor peasant. And what is he? A person of learning. And so, like all learned persons, he'll get on in the world and forget us and this unfortunate land.'

My journey had proved longer than I had imagined it would, and my absence more lasting. Some years later, in 1930, when ill and disheartened, I took refuge in a Swiss mountain village. I thought I had not much longer to live and I then began to write a tale which I called *Fontamara*. I built myself a village with the stuff of my memories and my dreams, and then I began to live in it. The result was a plain and simple tale, but its readers in many countries found it moving because of the nostalgia that pervaded it. Later on, I heard that this same name of 'Fontamara', which I had invented, already belonged to several villages in southern Italy, and that the events told by me in the story had actually occurred shortly before in various places, although not in the same order as in the book, and with differences of detail. Still, there is clearly no reason why these numerous coincidences should lessen the importance or the significance of this testimony of mine; I rather think that, if anything, they increase it. Names like Mary, John, Francis, Louis and so on, are common to a great many people; and the really important events of life—birth, love, suffering,

death—are common to all living beings; and yet people never grow tired of talking about them.

Alas, it is not easy, when one has grown to maturity, to return to the places where one spent one's childhood, if one's thoughts have never left them during all the years of absence, if one has continued, even at a distance, to live through their imagined events. It can even be a perilous undertaking.

And so I was painfully embarrassed when, a few days after the newspapers and radio had announced my return to Italy, a queer deputation composed of village authorities and leaders of local political groups came to see me in Rome, proposing a programme of ceremonies to be held in honour of my return to my native district. I was unable, at a moment's notice, to improvise the sort of little speech that would have used a screen of conventional pretexts to hide from these good people the shudders of horror that I felt at the mere idea of returning, amid a lot of fuss and rhetoric, to those places laden, for me, with memories of unspeakable sadness. The deputation consequently departed in bewilderment and, as I heard later, uncertain whether to attribute my discourteous refusal to extreme political intransigence or to morbid misanthropy. At any rate, fortunately for me, the matter rested there.

Then I got the parish priest's letter, and at first glance it seemed the usual letter, asking me to use my influence in some Government department to obtain a subsidy for an old ex-convict who had lately returned to the village; the sort of letter, in fact, that I was used to getting. But the name of the ex-convict awoke in me an echo that the parish priest could not have suspected. He had written: 'You can't possibly know the poor fellow because he went to gaol, for a criminal offence, the very year you were born': and this was the truth, but not the whole truth.

In the square in front of the station, I looked in vain for the 'bus' that used once to pass up the valley, as far as B. It had been discontinued a few years back, I was told.

'Wait here,' suggested the post-office clerk. 'Maybe some trap or cart will be along. You're a native of these parts yourself, aren't you?' In the middle of the square I saw a big fountain, with women crowding round it. Their traditional way of speaking, their traditional gestures, as in some ancient ritual fell like drops of honey in my heart. The young women wore their kerchiefs knotted at the nape of the neck, the old women wore them knotted under the chin. When one woman had filled her water-jar, another would help her to lift it and set it straight on the pad which protected her head. Even the old women would hold their heads high under the weight and walk erect, so as not to spill the water. Farther off, in the shade of a tree, a mother was rocking her baby; the cradle was formed like a tiny ship, and it had a slow undulating movement. Then some peasants arrived at the station, dressed in their Sunday clothes, weighed down with cumbersome baggage, and looking as usual like refugees or vagabonds.

'Did the war pass this way?' I asked the post-office clerk, as I looked around me. 'Somehow it doesn't look like that.'

'This village has been persecuted by Fate,' he explained to me. 'Even the earthquake passed it by. Here there's no rebuilding, no subsidies, no help at all. Nothing but misery.'

SUDDENLY I made up my mind to go ahead on foot; in fact, I thought I should prefer to do so.

'You'll be a couple of hours on the road,' the clerk warned me. 'You don't know that road; it's dusty and stony.'

'I'll take the short cut,' I answered in dialect.

'Ah, so you are from these parts,' he exclaimed in surprise.

In the valley, the green and yellow mosaic of the vines soon gave way to a barer landscape. The gloomy hills had as their sole adornment a few sickly cypresses and almond trees, and a few crucifixes that looked almost as though made of cardboard. The idea came to me that adolescence was an experience defined not only by time but also by space. How, I wondered, can people at a certain age cross the boundary

into a new country, if physically they go on living in the old country all the time? It is easier, simpler, more natural, perhaps also more honest, when you reach a certain age, to go away. But when you come to think of it, what does it really mean, 'going away'? How many of those who stayed here always and are now buried here, spent their lives in sighing for foreign countries, while it is an ancient truth that homesickness is the complaint of emigrants? This land—had I myself ever forgotten it? Had my imagination ever dreamt of anything that did not have here its beginning and its end? As I walked along, I tried to link up one year with another, to retrace my life's pattern; and in vain I asked myself if it had any meaning.

I met a country policeman with a gun slung across his shoulder and a string of skinned frogs threaded on a willow branch in his hand.

'There used to be a frog-catcher in B.,' I said to him, 'a man called Lazzaro. Did you ever know him? What became of him?'

'Poor fellow, he had nothing but trouble as long as he lived,' answered the policeman. 'But it was his own fault, believe me, he was really mad; not bad, but just mad.'

'What sort of trouble?' I asked.

'All sorts,' he answered. 'But I must say he brought them on himself; the fact is, he simply couldn't mind his own business, that was his form of madness.'

'He had a daughter called Laurina, hadn't he?' I asked. 'What became of her? Where is she now?'

The policeman, with a vague gesture of his hand, answered that he did not know.

At a certain point the valley narrowed and became warmer, hoarding the heat as though in a hothouse. The path began to run alongside the stream, and soon brought me to the point where the water falls from a wall of rock to form a clear and limpid pool. As a boy, I often came there and sat on the bank, dangling my feet in the icy current, and watching it flow by; and after a little while, the bank would begin to move, and I with the bank.

In this same place I now found an old woman resting on the grass, with a basket beside her full of walnuts. She seemed, in her abandoned exhaustion and weariness, a drowned thing stretched out there on the grass to dry. The moment she noticed me she sat up and smoothed her clothes. She had been to the weekly market at P., she told me, trying to sell the walnuts, but no one wanted to buy them. This was the third time she had brought them to market.

'But even if you did sell them,' I said, 'how much would you get for them? Would it make up to you for all your labour?'

'Labour?' she answered. 'A woman like me, the mother of a family, can she stop to think about the labour?'

She told me that she had a sick daughter at home, and that a doctor had prescribed pills for her and pills cost money. So she was trying to sell what she could, in order to buy the pills. She had been trying for three weeks unsuccessfully. If meanwhile her daughter died, what would people say? They would say, it's her mother's fault.

The old woman coughed, and after groping about a bit, struggled awkwardly to her feet in order to resume her wandering. I walked beside her for a while carrying the basket.

'I mustn't rest for long,' she said. 'If I were to rest for long, all the weariness would come to the surface, and I'd never get to my feet again; what little strength I have would take the opportunity of leaving me for ever. Even at night I have to get up two or three times, because it's I who bake the bread for our village. So I haven't got the time to be ill.'

After a short distance our ways parted, because the woman lived in the neighbourhood of O.

'Did you ever happen to know an old peasant of B.?' I asked her. 'Lazzaro was his name, and they called him the frog-catcher.'

'Indeed I did know him,' she answered 'Poor soul, what a hard life they gave him. He was a saint, no one could say a bad word about him, he never harmed a living creature; but he didn't know the meaning

of resignation, he couldn't keep his head bowed.'

'No one should resign himself to contempt,' said I. 'No one should resign himself to injustice.'

The woman stopped and looked at me with deep compassion.

'Poor fellow,' she said, 'so you too are one of those? But my poor boy, what good does it do, tell me, what good does it do, not being resigned?'

'And being resigned, what good does that do? I answered. 'What about you, old mother? Did it do you any good?'

'Indeed it didn't,' she said. 'But if it's all one whether we hold our heads high or low, we might just as well hold them low. For the salvation of our souls.'

'Lazzaro had a daughter,' I said. 'Laurina, she was called. Is she still alive?'

'She's still alive,' answered the woman. 'She lives like me, as a poor woman ought to, with bowed head. We're neighbours, as it happens.'

Then she added: 'I'll tell her I met you: she'll be pleased. What was your father's name?'

'The name doesn't matter,' I said.

There was B., on the hilltop. The village had not changed since the day I left it; you could still see, amidst the black huddle of houses, the ruined spaces left by the earthquake of thirty years ago. At the entrance to the village I was seized by a sudden, unaccountable hesitation; I wanted to turn back, to run away. But it must have been just the moment for taking the bread out of the oven, and a puff of wind brought me a smell of fresh bread that softened and won me.

An old man, a stranger to me, looking like a beggar, was walking ahead of me dragging his feet after him and spitting to his right at intervals of about ten paces.

'Old man,' I said, 'where does the parish priest live?'

He stopped and looked suspiciously at me.

'Can you give me a match?' he asked.

I gave him a match.

'Give me another,' he said.

I gave him several others. Then he promptly turned his back on me, and went off down a lane without the answering question. But I found him again at the sacristy door.

'It must be the fellow for the taxes,' he was saying to the priest. 'Hurry up and hide yourself.'

The parish priest did not recognise me at first, and invited me into the sacristy with an embarrassed gesture and a timid smile calculated to inspire pity, a sickly sweet smile, like the honey of bees that feed in cemeteries. But when he heard my first words, he was relieved; he grew excited, he gesticulated wildly, he wanted to go out and tell the news to the mayor and the people of the village. He must have been the same age as I, because we went to school together, but he looked much older.

'I'm here just by accident,' I said. 'I'm merely passing through. I'm off again tonight or tomorrow.'

'Did no one recognise you on the road?' he asked.

'Twenty-five years have gone by,' I said.

'You mean twenty-five centuries,' he corrected. 'Exactly twenty-five centuries.'

'I'd be glad if no one recognised me,' I said. 'I've lost my taste for fuss and commotion. And the few people here whom I should have liked to see again are no longer alive.'

'The village suffered greatly during the war,' he told me. 'The Germans killed or carried off all the cattle. You ought to talk to the mayor. You could help us a lot.'

'It's just by sheer accident that I've come this time,' I said. 'I happened to be passing through this part of the country, and thought I'd stop here for a few hours, that's all. So I'd be grateful if you wouldn't give me away to anyone. But since I am here, there is that thing you wrote to me about. Could I have a word with the man you mention?'

'I'll call him at once,' he said, standing up. 'He's outside the door: he's the very one that was telling me you had arrived.'

The priest went over to the door to call

the man; he called him a couple of times, but the man refused to come in.

'Leave me alone with him,' I said then.

The man was squatting on the trunk of an elm tree that lay against the sacristy wall. He was leaning with his back against the wall and he looked like any old beggar.

'I have a story to tell you,' I said.

'First give me a match,' he answered.

I gave him a match and sat down beside him. I saw that instead of shoes he had bandages of rags on his feet; his grey hair was still thick and unruly; his hands and face were of an earthy-brown colour and cracked all over; but what struck me most in him were his eyes, of a strange rare green, which gave him an expression of shrewd weariness.

'At home,' I said, 'when I was still a child, we had as a servant a village woman whom you could see, by her appearance and manner, to be of a better family than the usual run of servants in our part of the country.'

'Are you from these parts?' he asked. 'What was your father's name?'

'You'll soon guess,' I said. 'I could never understand why that woman had been obliged to become a servant in other people's houses. Throughout my childhood, this remained one of the many questions to which I could get only evasive answers. "She's had great misfortunes in her family," my mother would tell me. "She's had to spend every penny on lawyers' fees. Be good to her." In her bearing and manner she was, as I said, in no way different from us; misfortune had not taken away her pride. And her eyes were green; like yours. You know, I've travelled far, and I've never seen other eyes like those.'

The man rose abruptly to his feet and signed to me to follow him. Someone called to him from a distance, but he made no reply. Down deserted lanes he led me to an old church that had been half-destroyed by the earthquake and never rebuilt. Among other fragments, there remained standing, and you can see it from a distance, part of the dome, painted on the inside a blue sky with hosts of the blessed carrying garlands of roses and the inscription 'Gloria'. A corner of the building remained intact and had been walled off and roofed. This was now allotted by the parish as a refuge to the ex-convict. There were just four bare walls, with the joinings of the stones clearly visible; a lantern was hanging by a piece of wire from a beam in the roof; in one corner was a stretcher and beside it a table with a loaf of bread, an onion and a few walnuts. From a deep niche hollowed out of the wall, the man took a bottle and a glass and silently offered me a drink, with the solemnity and reverence of a deacon pouring the wine into the chalice of the celebrant.

We sat down on the stretcher and I went on talking.

'It was only,' I said, 'after the long period of solitary confinement, the first part of your life-sentence, was ended, that your mother began to get letters from you. But as you know, your mother—although intelligent and the daughter of well-to-do farmers—could neither read nor write. Such cases were, as you also know, fairly frequent in our part of the country; in those days, for a girl to be taught reading and writing was still considered by country people, if not a sin, at least frivolous or extravagant. In those days, I hadn't yet left the elementary school and I didn't then understand why, with so many trustworthy people who could have read her your letters and answered them for her, your mother should have singled me out. You know what was the unvarying theme of all your letters and all of our replies, and if you remember how young I was then, you won't be surprised if I tell you now without exaggeration, it was the first great event of my life. It was followed later by others, of more or less the same kind, which determined my future.

'In the beginning it used to amaze me, among other things, that such a scrupulously honest woman as your mother should use me for so serious a correspondence without my parents knowing it. In the end I asked her straight out to tell me why. "Now that you have read his letters," she said, "do you believe in my son's innocence?" "Oh, I'm sure of it," I answered. "I know that he

wasn't the murderer." "Well," said your mother, "the others, all the others, are convinced of the contrary. That's why I don't want to turn to them".'

'Were you convinced of my innocence from the first?' asked the man.

'From the very first?'

'Of course,' said I. 'I knew it at once.'

'How?' he insisted. 'What made you think it?'

'It was quite simple,' I answered. 'I just knew. "But what," I asked your mother, "can my opinion possibly matter to you? I'm still a child," I said. "That's the very reason why," your mother explained, "just because you are still innocent." From that moment, however, I must confess that I began to doubt my own innocence and the innocence of the world. It was a new and deeply preoccupying thought for me that I could not share my certainty of your innocence with my parents, nor with the schoolmaster, nor with the parish priest, and that everything I did in consequence of that secret certainty of mine had therefore also to be done in secret. So there was a forbidden good? In short, I felt that I was drawn into a real conspiracy with a convict and his mother, against Injustice, under whose banners, however, the State and public opinion had ranged themselves. In every one of your letters you used to repeat the arguments for your innocence. You never despaired, but kept on refuting the circumstantial evidence on which, without proof, you had been condemned for homicide. They used, these letters, to cause me sleepless nights, or else haunt my sleep with terrible nightmares. And the letters I used to write in reply? You must remember that I had never been away from home, and had never before had occasion to write to anyone. As you can easily imagine, my school work soon took a secondary place in my thoughts, compared with this secret duty. Each reply used to absorb me entirely for several days; it was not easy for a child of my age to find appropriate expression for all the things your mother used to tell me, about herself, about the lawyers, about the false witnesses, about the debts to be paid, about the petitions to be sent to the King, to the Queen Mother, to the Crown Prince, to the Duke of Abruzzi, to the Pope, and to General Garibaldi's granddaughter. All this, as you know, lasted for several years; and during all those years, it was my adventure, my romance, my conspiracy; until your mother died of heart failure, when she became convinced that there could be no reopening of your case. There, I've told you all this only to explain why, yesterday, the moment I got a letter from the parish priest in which he happened to mention your name, I took the train and came at once to see you.'

By now the man's face was buried in his hands.

'Maybe I've talked too much about myself,' I said. 'But I had to, if you were to trust me.'

The man stood up.

'I don't know if you like green peppers?' he asked. 'You must excuse me if I've got nothing else to offer you.'

He went out by a little door opening on to what was formerly the enclosure of the church, now cluttered with rubble. A tripod for cooking stood among some blackened stones. I followed him.

'There's one thing I'd like to ask you,' I said.

'You want to know if I am really innocent of the murder for which I spent forty-five years in prison?'

'No,' I said. 'Far from it. I only want to know why you would never explain, neither to your lawyer nor to your mother nor to the jury, where you spent your time the night of the murder. As you know, you were condemned mainly because of your silence on that essential point.'

'Listen,' he said, 'please believe me, I'm sorry, but I couldn't tell that even to you.'

He took some peppers out of the basket, opened them, removed the seeds carefully, and arranged them in a frying-pan on the tripod.

'I don't know, he said, 'if you like green peppers. But please excuse me, I've got nothing else to offer you.'

A prominent Catholic politician, author and publisher, defends the attitude of the Church in the conflict between East and West

A Reply to KARL BARTH

CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS, M.P.

It would be idle if I did not confess that I have been most deeply shocked by the two articles from Herr Karl Barth which have appeared in the July and August numbers of *World Review*. The shock is all the greater because of the respect in which I, along with all others, hold Herr Barth. I am shocked not because Herr Barth's opinions are not precisely my own but because, whatever else may be debatable about the duty of the Christian in a difficult situation, it cannot be debated that his first duty is to record accurately—and this more particularly when he is recording the opinions of others. It is this inaccuracy in Herr Barth which is so deeply shocking.

It is Herr Barth's argument that the conflict of the modern world is primarily a conflict of power politics between Russia and the United States. Other countries are attached to one or other of the protagonists. It is true that there are many unlovely and un-Christian features in the system of the East. But are there not also un-Christian features in the system of the West? Above all, the conflict is not for a Christian end but merely for power. A Christian, simply because he lives in the West and has a natural preference for Western ways, must not therefore identify the Western cause with the Christian cause. 'Both sides are in fact aiming at something like a right faith.' He must not do anything which makes a conflict between East and West more probable and above all must not allow such a conflict to be misrepresented as a Crusade. The Christian, alike in the East and the West, must be content to stand aside both from the Eastern and from the Western way and to show to the world 'another, a third way, its own way'.

There are so many questions begged in this strange argument that it is hard to know where to begin.

In the first place, it is indeed true that Western society is not a perfect Christian society. Who ever claimed that it was? It is indeed possible to take the theories of certain capitalist economists or perhaps the practice of certain individuals within the capitalist economy and to argue that these theories and practices are every bit as materialistic as any that are to be found under Communism. But surely the difference is that under the Western system every activity of man is not compelled to subordinate itself to the economic purposes. While in the West some people may disedifyingly give their lives to buying in cheapest markets and selling in dearest, nobody compels them to do so, and others may spend their lives in writing poetry or in playing cricket, in visiting the sick or in the spiritual life. Western society may not be by any means a Christian society, but it is at least a society in which a man is free to be a Christian if he wishes.

Or, again, we in the West are, if you care to call us so, capitalist, but we are not capitalist in the sense that Russia is Communist. For we

have a machinery by which we can peacefully change our economic system or any other system, if we wish. Herr Barth complains that 'the West has so far not hurt a hair of the head of the Spanish dictator, Franco, but it is by no means averse to including this totalitarianism, of which the Spanish Protestants can tell us a good deal, in the planning of its eastern front. And why was so remarkably little said here when shortly before Christmas last the Dutch, with whom generally speaking we have so much in common, attacked their Indonesians?' Could more unfair writing be imagined? Everyone knows that enormous economic suffering has been imposed upon the Spaniards because, rightly or wrongly, Americans and Europeans are not willing to include Franco in their schemes of economic relief and that, rightly or wrongly, Americans and Europeans have been prepared to throw their whole defence policy into jeopardy rather than make an alliance with Franco. The Dutch were arraigned before the United Nations and compelled to compose their quarrel with the Indonesians. Nations of the West took sides against them.

The Communist society, on the other hand, is not such a society in which the Christian can even speak freely. The fate of every single Christian leader, Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox, in Communist countries is sufficient proof of this.

But then, says Herr Barth, is war the way to resolve this conflict? Will not war merely destroy an evil in order to give us a greater evil in its place? Again, what a begging of the question! What responsible Christian leader has advocated war or a warlike 'crusade' against Communist Russia? Herr Barth is simply inventing opinions and putting them into the mouths of his co-religionists. We are all agreed that it is our supreme purpose to avoid war, if it can possibly be avoided. But Herr Barth simply assumes that war is more probable if it is talked about and less probable if it is not talked about. The assumption is as wanton as it is unlikely. Herr Barth gives us his picture of two tyrannical giants glaring at one another, each suspicious of the other and each with every reason to be suspicious of the other, but of the two he thinks that East has slightly more reason to be suspicious of the West, if we look at the map and see 'in how many places America—directly or indirectly through her British ally—has blocked Russia's access to the sea.' I do not know how many places Herr Barth has in mind. Does he suggest that it is our Christian duty to compel the Danes to join the Soviet Union against their will, or to abandon the Greek people, which has freely expressed its opposition to Communism, to the massacre of its neighbours? But what is absolutely extraordinary about Herr Barth's thesis is that there is no breath of a mention in either of his articles that Communism has made any territorial gains in the last years. The truth is, of course, that it has annexed half Europe, right up to the line of Stettin and Trieste. Communism is already within the walls of Europe. It made gains incomparably greater than had ever been made by any conqueror in history. It did this against the overwhelming opinion, as expressed by every electoral test, of the peoples annexed, but with the connivance and encouragement of the British and Americans. In the Western countries that were not surrendered to Communism, Communists, though in a minority, were allowed key positions in the Governments. It was we who assigned that territory to Russian influence.

The evidence is overwelming that at the end of the war both Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Eden thought that a policy of generosity would win the Russians. They made to them concessions for which many people today hold them gravely to blame. But, however that may be, there is no dispute about the fact that no one in Britain or America thought of war with Russia as a possibility in 1945 and that, if it has become a possibility by 1949, it is entirely the fault of Russian policy.

What conceivable purpose can be served by this senseless rhetoric about power politics, by this searching out of particular causes, when we have the clearest evidence,

both of Marx and Lenin, that such talk is irrelevant, and that in their belief in the day of decay of capitalism, conflict between Communist and non-Communist societies is inevitable, whatever the particular circumstances.

'*You will have to go through fifteen, twenty, fifty years of civil wars and international conflicts,*' Marx told the workers. '*The existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with the Imperialist states for a long time is unthinkable,*' said Lenin. '*A series of frightful collisions between the Soviet Republic and the bourgeois states will be inevitable.*'

HERR Barth's theories seem to be evolved out of a complete indifference to the evidence, but it cannot be a Christian duty to bear false witness—even against one's fellow Christians. The issue is not whether we shall have a crusade to change the Government of Russia, but whether we shall allow Russia to impose a Government which they do not want on the peoples of the West, such as they have already imposed on the peoples of the East. It is really too disingenuous for Herr Barth to say, 'let us see to it that all our thoughts are based on reconstruction in the West', when every day's news confirms the frank admissions of Lenin and Stalin that a prime purpose of Communist policy is to prevent the reconstruction of the West.

Again, it is obviously true that there is always and everywhere a certain temptation to confound with Christianity certain local and accidental features of a society of a people who happen to be Christians. Certainly, to quote Herr Barth, 'the Western conscience and judgment is not necessarily the Christian judgment.' We in the West, like all others, must be on our guard against that temptation, but Herr Barth's picture of a West, complacent in its Western Christianity, standing at bay against the East and the Eastern Christians, is a fantastic picture. 'How can we see exactly from this distance,' he asks, 'whether the Christians of Prague and Budapest would prefer to remain "firm" rather than tread the path of collaboration?' It is a strange question. The evidence, I should have thought, was fairly abundant. If the Christians in the East under persecution had deserted their faith, who are we, it might be asked, to condemn them? But where they have remained constant to their faith, who are we to desert them? This turning of other people's other cheeks does not strike me as particularly Christian. It is precisely the cry that goes up from the Christian leaders of the East, from Cardinal Mindszenty, from Archbishop Beran, from the Bulgarian pastors, which forbids us to follow Herr Barth's road to neutrality and to the abandonment of our Eastern brethren.

Russia, of course, was and will be again, one of the great countries of Christendom. What student of Dostoievsky could deny the spiritual depths in the Russian soul or be unaware that the West had much to learn from the Christianity of Russia? It may well be that, both in the past and now, we have failed to learn many lessons from Russian orthodoxy that we ought to have learnt. But where are the great Orthodox teachers today? Berdyaev was a great Orthodox teacher. There was much that the West had to learn from him. But it was not in Moscow that he gave his lessons. He gave them in Paris.

'Let the Church in the East see to it,' writes Herr Barth. What can he mean? What freedom has the Church in the East to see to any such thing? How can anyone represent this as a conflict between the East and the West, each anxious to go his own way? How many millions are there from the East who have braved every danger in order to find the miserable refuge of a Displaced Person in the West? How many are there in contrast from the West who have sought to make their home in the East? A mere handful.

Let us take a concrete example. Herr Barth in the West can write an article pleading for impartiality and neutrality and Christian freedom. What would have happened had he sought to write such an article in the East? We need not answer from opinion. On this, as on other matters, the Communists have themselves given us their official answer with the completest frankness.

Zhdanov, in prosecuting Alexandrov, the editor of the *Bolshevik*, said:
'*Marxism-Leninism knows no compromise in its struggle against foreign bourgeois philosophical opinions . . . and yet the author presents the history of philosophy objectively and does not demonstrate the class-content of various philosophical systems . . . he consistently pursues his objective conception throughout the whole book . . . As a result Comrade Alexandrov, perhaps unsuspectingly, was caught in the grip of the bourgeois historians of philosophy, who see in every philosopher first of all a professional ally and only afterwards an adversary. Such conceptions, if allowed to develop among us, would inevitably lead to objectivity, to subservience to bourgeois philosophers and to exaggeration of their merits.*'

OBJECTIVITY to Zhdanov was not a virtue which had not yet been wholly attained; it was a vice to be condemned and to be shunned—and logically so on the Communist principle.

What I find, I must confess, alike particularly irritating and particularly unconvincing is Herr Barth's complacent assumption that, by preaching neutrality, he is making peace more probable. All the evidence shows that, by preaching neutrality, he is making war more probable. 'We can only speak in favour and support of every relaxation of the tension and do what we can to increase the remaining fund of reason, which may still be at the disposal of notoriously unreasonable humanity,' he writes. Of course, but which is the more likely to induce reason in the Bolsheviks—a policy of appeasement or a policy of firmness? The Communist movement is a militant movement which believes itself with all fanaticism destined to conquer the world and to conquer it through violence. If it is confronted with a weak and pacific West, it will indubitably attack. On the other hand, it is directed by astute tacticians who have no mind to court defeat. The material resources of the West are overwhelming. There is no chance of a Russian victory and therefore no probability of a war unless the West should enfeeble itself by its own weakness. There is no question of a crusade against Russia. That is a figment of Herr Barth's own imagination. The only question is whether Russia will attack the West. If she should do so, it will be very largely through the encouragement given to her by such theories as those of Herr Barth, and such theories will bear a very large part of the responsibility for the catastrophe.

Herr Barth argues that Russian Communism is less dangerous than German Nazism precisely because it does not pretend to be Christian. There is no danger of anybody suspecting it to be a Christian creed, whereas Nazism 'tried to represent itself in the guise of a falsified Christianity.' I do not know that it tried very hard, and the argument which of the two was the worse seems to have little importance and little meaning. I do not think that there were many people who took their Christianity at all seriously and who knew anything of Germany who fancied that the Nazi was in any way a Christian creed. In any event, within Germany, as the evidence of the Control Commission bears witness, 'both denominations' (i.e. Catholics and Protestants) 'were the chief centres of opposition to National Socialism. They were far more courageous than the trades unions, the universities, the intellectuals and the army in their determination to uphold truth, justice and righteousness.'

But, on the other hand, though Herr Barth feels under no temptation to consider the Communist as a Christian creed, he does succumb to a temptation to take it at its face value as a protest against an evil in the modern world, in very much the same way as did those who before the war welcomed Nazism as a bulwark against Communism. He thinks that the Communists stand at any rate for a tackling of 'the social problem', which has not been 'tackled anything like energetically enough in the West.' But, inadequate as are purely materialistic criteria, there is no reason whatsoever to think that even on those criteria the East has any superiority over the West. Herr Koestler in his *Yogi and Commisar* has shown us that the

(*Continued on page 79*)

The Significance of SIR LAURENCE

A STREETCAR

by TENNESSEE

To be presented at THE

The author: TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

HAROLD HOBSON

QUITE a number of new dramatists have emerged into prominence since the end of the war. William Douglas Home has shown considerable skill in transferring to the stage certain aspects of experience that have come under his direct observation; Peter Ustinov, with the icy assistance of Miss Gladys Cooper, advanced his reputation with *The Indifferent Shepherd*; and in America Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller have, in the space of the past three years, become names of resounding importance.

They have made an impact on the New York theatre far greater than any young dramatist has made upon the English. It is a good thing that this should be so. For the London theatre can exist, and even flourish, without young playwrights of note. The New York stage cannot. This is the main reason why *A Streetcar* is an important play.

It seems likely that the main work of the realistic dramatists, who have made the English theatre illustrious during the last fifty years, is now completed. Shaw, Maugham, Barker, Galsworthy, Coward have had their brilliant day. It is no great matter if that day is ended. The value of the English theatre does not at any time necessarily depend upon the worth of its contemporary dramatists. Three of its greatest ages—those of Garrick, Kean and Irving—coincided with periods in which its acted original authors were of the lowest quality imaginable. The English stage can achieve distinction merely through the work of its actors. If Shaw and Coward fall out, Gielgud and Olivier step in. We then get an actors' theatre instead of an authors'. But it can be a good theatre, all the same, though of a different kind.

This solution of the problem created by the natural weakening through age and familiarity of the realistic school of dramatists is not open to America. The acting theatre of New York has no stability. The existence of Hollywood, the lure of enormous contracts, makes the players of New

OLIVIER'S *production of*

NAMED DESIRE

WILLIAMS

ALDWYCH THEATRE *in October*

and ERIC CAPON

The producer: SIR LAURENCE OLIVIER

York restless and dissatisfied. Hoping that their stay upon the stage will be as short as they can make it, they have no inducement to plan out a long-term policy, or to perfect their art. The English film studios, of course, exercise a similar influence in the West End. But it is weaker; and in England it is possible to do both film and stage work. In America geographical reasons prevent this. The New York theatre must discover new dramatists, or die.

JUST now, it does not look like dying. Life is being pumped into it from two sources: by the extraordinary vitality of its musicals, on the one hand, and by Miller and Williams on the other.

I have said that the New York theatre cannot successfully base itself upon the art of acting. This means that the New York theatre cannot rely upon a solid continuance of a large number of outstanding performances from a large number of players; it does not mean that now and again very fine individual performances are not given on Broadway. *A Streetcar* is in fact a play that demands an extremely fine central performance; on the nature of that performance much of its impact depends.

Its main character, Blanche duBois, is a Southern schoolteacher whose uncontrolled sexual desires lead her from degradation to degradation until, out of appalling poverty and brutality, she is finally taken away to a mental institution. Blanche duBois was played first in New York by the English Jessica Tandy, who made in the rôle an astounding popular and personal success. I did not see her performance, but I am told that it encouraged the prevalent notion among the public that Blanche is an example of nymphomania. After appearing as Blanche for more than a year, Miss Tandy has now left the cast, and her place has been taken by Uta Hagen. Miss Hagen denies Blanche's nymphomania. Her interpretation of the part is, broadly speaking, that of the good,

1 Blanche: '*He acts like an animal; has animal's habits!*'

2 Stanley: '*What do you think you are? A pair of queens?*'

3 Stanley: '*We have had this date from the beginning.*'

4 Matron: '*Jacket, doctor?*'

SCENES FROM THE NEW YORK PRODUCTION WITH UTA HAGEN AND ANTHONY QUINN

5 *The curtain falls on the drama.* Steve: '*This game is seven-card stud.*'

weak girl gone wrong. It sounds sentimental, but on the stage it is profoundly moving. There is a scene, for example, in which a young newspaper lad comes to Blanche to collect a subscription. Miss Hagen is overwhelmed by a vision of lost innocence that is extraordinarily touching. Miss Tandy played this scene (and it is cogently arguable that she was in accord with the author's intention) as though Blanche were just a woman of the streets looking for another customer.

The particular kind of impression the play will make in London is bound to depend, therefore, on Miss Vivien Leigh's interpretation of the chief part. However Miss Leigh regards Blanche, though, *A Streetcar* emerges as a deep criticism of the old slave-holding states of the South. The social disintegration of the South appears to be, in fact, a permanent preoccupation of Mr. Williams's. It was at the foundation of his *The Glass Menagerie*, which John Gielgud directed over here during 1947; and he did not, I believe, escape from it in *Summer and Smoke*, his most recent production. This preoccupation, rendered invariably in terms of the study of a woman's frustration and moral collapse, causes some anxiety to Mr. Williams's admirers in the United States. They wonder if it indicates a limitation of subject from which he will never escape.

It is significant that the work both of Miller and Williams is severely critical of the United States. In the theatre the old period of bragging about God's Own Country seems to be ending. Twisting the lion's tail has given way to pulling Uncle Sam's beard. Is this a mark of increasing self-confidence or an affliction of doubt and misgiving? Perhaps the former. Smugness is rarely a sign of strength.

Though in effect a brilliant presentation of moral disintegration, and informed with understanding pity, *A Streetcar* shows some uncertainties of technique. In *The Glass Menagerie*, Mr. Williams employed that curious method of sliding about in time, of melting one scene into another separated from it both in time and space, which Mr. Miller uses in *Death of a Salesman*. In *A Streetcar* Williams adopts more straightforward ways of telling a story. Occasionally he gets into difficulties with them. One of his characters will come to the point of recounting something we have already seen happen. What is the author to do in these circumstances? Is he to bore us with a repeat of what we already know? Mr. Williams thinks not. At these points he simply brings down the curtain. It has an odd truncated effect, like someone stopping halfway through a sentence.

The language of the play is what might be called free and easy, or ribald and coprological. The coprology and ribaldry are entertaining, perhaps too entertaining. They induce a mood of hilarity that is apt to slip over into the serious parts of the play. It is difficult to discuss lavatories one moment and souls the next. Thus one or two of the more important scenes take a little while to establish themselves; but once their hold is fixed, it is absolute, as, in the end, is the hold of the play itself. HAROLD HOBSON

A SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

WHEN I first met Tennessee Williams, I did not receive the conventional shock one is supposed to get on meeting a writer about whose work one is enthusiastic—merely a slight jolt. That was caused mainly by the moustache for which I was quite unprepared. The rest fell into line.

From his writings, it had been difficult but not impossible to construct a personality. Speculating on the way to meet him, certain possibilities presented themselves: passive rather than active, a listener rather than a talker, above all, someone with a fine balance of masculine realism and feminine

sympathy. My wife insisted, for reasons that I have never been able to fathom, that he must indubitably be a small man. So we concluded that he was probably tall, dark and handsome.

But it was not so. Our original assumptions were, in the main, right. He was short, thick-set, with compassionate eyes and a rather bushy moustache that tended to obscure the mouth. He spoke in a soft drawl that was not markedly Southern, though certainly different from the harsher edge of the New Yorker. In manner he was shy without being diffident, friendly but not effusive, speaking little but always to the point—in fact, at least superficially, very un-American. Except for his accent, which was in any case slighter than most of his compatriots, it would have been hard to 'place' him. He seemed a European as well as an American.

Subsequent experience confirmed these first impressions. A very close friend of his told me that he feels most at home in Italy as a place where, away from the big towns, no questions are asked. Certainly in the minutiæ of existence, he seemed profoundly uninterested, including the possibility of fixing an appointment—though this may have been the conventional gambit to stave off unwelcome attention. But I don't think so. He responded on one occasion to straightforward kidnapping, after many fruitless phone calls, with the utmost charm and alacrity. Provided the kidnapper, as in this case, although barely known to him, could respond sensitively to personal small talk and asked no leading or embarrassing questions, then he was plainly prepared to go along anywhere that was suggested.

This apparent vagueness and lack of personal organisation is balanced by an equal artistic definiteness. In rehearsals he can tell the producer down to the smallest detail what he has intended in his plays. He writes them clearly, visualising them in performance and not as a literary exercise. He has also an extraordinary percipient eye for detail on which he will far more likely remark in conversation, than utter a generalisation. It may be a jewel that someone is wearing or, as on one occasion, an amusing notice pinned in a darkened doorway through which he, with a crowd of others, was passing and which he alone appeared to notice.

As one might expect, he is a great admirer of Chekhov, not usually an American favourite, and when I first met him he was enthusiastic about the Liverpool Rep's *Cherry Orchard* which was then in London. Other fashionable successes held no interest. This is as it should be in his case for he is, in part, that kind of writer—an observer, a mental note-taker in the wings with no desire to harangue from centre-stage. Like Chekhov, also, though he has a clear sense and interest in social movement, his interest is not only in the human beings that cause it, but more particularly in the victims, the wild ducks, *en route*.

In conversation this very profound sympathy can often be felt. Like many American writers who grew up in the depression, he led a hobo existence, and his knowledge of the flotsam and jetsam of American life is considerable. What is distinctive is not only his sympathy but his personal identification with such people, his desire to plead for them. The ill-adjusted, wherever he sees them, interest him, because he feels that if their plight is ignored, then the outlook for whatever form of society that evolves is dark indeed.

Such a stand always requires courage, particularly in America, with its success mania and its good fraternity member ethics. It probably accounts not only for the frequently heard condemnation of him as interested only in neurotics, but also in his personal behaviour. Someone so abnormally sensitive needs some protection, possibly a disguise.

From this, I felt, probably came his elusiveness, the vagueness and, possibly, even the moustache; but from this also came the deeply cultivated, uncynical, fundamentally warm-hearted personality whom it was a privilege to encounter.

ERIC CAPON

'Sap the foundations of Rational belief in God—as logical positivism cannot help but do—and you sow the seeds of intolerance and dogmatism'

Logical Positivism, its Nature and Influence

C. E. M. JOAD

LOGICAL POSITIVIST CONCLUSIONS

Logical positivism is a school of contemporary philosophy which maintains three important propositions.

First, in regard to the familiar world of everyday things, it holds that the meaning of any statement about it is the mode of that statement's verification, is, that is to say, the method by which we verify its truth. Now, by verification is meant sensory verification, that is to say, the occurrence of certain sensations. Hence, the meaning of the statement, 'this is a table', is that I am now having certain sensations of squareness and brownness and that, if I move my body in a certain direction, I shall have certain sensations of hardness and coolness.

Secondly, all metaphysical and theological statements are meaningless. This is because metaphysical statements, which are to the effect that reality is a unity, or is rational, or is mind, or is matter, or that the universe has meaning and purpose, or that the familiar world of things extended in space is only an appearance of another order of reality that underlies it, precisely because they are *not* about the world we experience by means of our senses, cannot be verified in sense experience. As to theology, since the existence of God cannot be verified in sense experience, we cannot meaningfully say anything about Him. Thus, as Professor Ayer puts it in his book, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 'All utterances about the nature of God are nonsensical.'

Thirdly, propositions about ethics and aesthetics, as, for example, 'patience is a virtue', 'murder is wrong', 'this ought to be done', 'this is beautiful', 'Beethoven's music is greater than Gershwin's', 'Shakespeare's plays are better than Coward's', do not make any statements about the 'objects' to which they purport to refer, about 'patience' or 'murder' or 'Beethoven' or 'Shakespeare'; they simply express or ejaculate an emotion felt by the person making the statement. This again follows from the first proposition; since goodness, duty, evil, beauty, ugliness, and so on, are not perceived by our senses, and since *sensory* experience is the only kind of experience that is admitted, statements whose truth presupposes the presence in the universe of non-sensory factors, as, for example, standards of moral worth by which people's conduct can be measured and assessed, are meaningless statements.

These doctrines have in recent years had a considerable effect on the minds of young persons, so much so that, as a recent writer in the *New Statesman* affirmed, Professor Ayer's book 'has in Oxford since the end of the war acquired almost the status of a philosophic Bible.' I shall not here attempt to criticise them. My concern is to consider what are likely to be the effects of their adoption upon the minds of young men.

THE FIRST EFFECTS

It is customary among logical positivists to say that what may be called the *extra*-philosophical effects of their theories are negligible. I do not think that this view can be maintained. Most of the beliefs that have stirred men's minds have had, or have professed to have, metaphysical foundations. Destroy the foundations, and you increase the difficulty of believing in the existence of any order of reality other than that which science studies. Thus you will tend to believe in objective physical facts, but not in objective laws which the facts obey; in a natural world, but not in a Creator who made it; in the individual, but not in a body politic which is more than the sum total of the individuals who compose it. It is, indeed, hard to see how any mind which was seriously affected by logical positivist modes of thought could accept the Hegelian notion of the State as a Super-person, or even the Fascist concept of the nation equipped with its apparatus of sacred missions and divine destinies and pregnant with its historically fated *rôle* upon the stage of history.

So far, so good, but there is more to follow. If you destroy the grounds for believing in the existence of an objective order of value, you will hold that ethical and aesthetic judgments which ascribe value to conduct and works of art. Among these judgments are (i) that some human characters and some courses of action are really better than others; (ii) that good cannot be equated with what any person or body of persons happens to approve of, and (iii) that our duty ought to be performed, however disagreeable it may happen to be. If you hold that these conclusions are irrational, you are less likely to do your duty, if it is disagreeable, and more likely to equate good with what you happen to desire. As for moral scruples, they will tend to be dismissed as survivals from a guilt-ridden childhood, or as mere rationalisations of the impulse to blame.

The force of dominant purposes is also weakened. This is not the place for a discussion of what constitutes the good life; but many would, I think, agree that it includes, for most of us, the conception of one or more dominating purposes, in the service of which interests which might otherwise have been cultivated are eschewed, and to which other aims which might have been pursued are subjugated. The sort of purposes that I have in mind are those that naturally arise in connection with religion, with politics, or in the service of mankind. They are also ambition for power and the pursuit of wealth; or a man's mind may be dominated by a preoccupying interest rather than a purpose as, for example, in gambling, in archaeology, or in bird watching. It is the pursuit of such a purpose, the cultivation of such an interest, whether good or bad, which invests life with significance and gives it zest. Yet whole-heartedly to pursue it, is not easy. Other pursuits claim their share of attention; other interests break in, and it is in general only men who are imbued with an intense conviction, an overpowering ambition, or an unshakable sense of worth who have been able to achieve the necessary suppressions and sacrifices. Without the conviction, without the sense of worth, what Plato calls the third part of the soul is apt to take charge. Reject as theoretically groundless the conceptions of objective value and intrinsic worth, and you make the practical efforts and restraints which are necessary, if men are to act as if some things are really worth while in a sense in which others are not, more difficult of achievement. In fact, I find it hard to resist the conclusion that, if one really believed that the doctrines of logical positivism were true, it would be hard to resist the temptation to lead the life which Plato called 'democratic'—a Bohemian in art, a Laodicean in affairs, a sceptic in philosophy and religion, an inconstant in love and a dilettante in life.

A point which is often overlooked in connection with the emotive theory of ethics and religion is that to embrace it is to deprive both ethics and religion of emotive significance. Let us suppose that the statement, 'God is Love', is not a statement about God, but is only an expression of the emotions of love and reverence. Let us suppose,

further, that I come to believe this. God, I shall now hold, is not loving or merciful; in fact, God is not anything at all, since He will fall under the general ban on metaphysics. How, then, shall I continue to feel the emotions of love and reverence for that which I now believe to be non-existent? To put the point in another way, if I believe that the statement, 'God is Love', is purely emotive, then it ceases for me to express emotion.

Similarly with ethical statements. If I consistently believe that the statement, 'Stealing is wrong', does no more than express an emotion of horror at stealing, it will presently cease to express the emotion of horror. Not to put too fine a point on it, I shall cease to believe that stealing is wrong.

Now let us consider what bearing the positivist ban on metaphysics has upon the notion of the class or the system. A class is not observable, nor is a system; we can observe only individuals. Descriptive statements about classes and systems are, therefore, meaningless. To quote a recent writer on this subject,[1] 'there are', if logical positivism is right, 'no mankind, no profit system, no parties, no Fascism, no underfed people, no inadequate housing, no shoddy clothes, no truth and no social justice.'

Again, if there is no such thing as Fascism, in the sense of a definite and describable social system, then it would be impossible to identify individual Fascists, 'for individual Fascists are Fascists precisely because they strive to bring into existence, or to maintain in existence, that very system itself.'

This seems to be a valid comment. I object to Fascism, though I may like individual Fascists. If there is no system, Fascism, or rather, if the statement, 'Fascism is a political system', is meaningless, then it is difficult to see what is left for me to object to.

Again, if there is no objective right and wrong, if moral judgments are, as logical positivists hold, merely ejaculations of emotions of approval and disapproval, then, as Mr. Dunham points out, one cannot demonstrate that Fascist practices are evil; one can only express dislike of them. 'No philosophy,' he comments, 'would better please the Fascists themselves, since moral questions could then be left in the hands of the police.'

Finally, if logical positivism is correct, you can say, 'one atom bomb can destroy 50,000 people' (statement of fact), but not, 'it is a bad thing to destroy 5,000 people' (statement of evaluation)—or rather, you can say it, but the 'word "bad" adds nothing to the factual content of the statement.'

Now, can anyone seriously maintain that the spread of such doctrines will have no consequences for ethics, politics and theology, or that their effect upon young and generous minds, protesting passionately against cruelty and injustice and eager to set the world to rights, will not be to sap effort, discourage initiative, destroy the hope of change and so to assist reaction and sanction inertia?

Can a man really continue to feel indignant at cruelty, if he is convinced that the statement, 'cruelty is wrong', is meaningless? An emotion of indignation may, indeed, be felt; it may even be expressed; but it will not long survive the conviction that it is without authority in morals or basis in reason.

THE FURTHER EFFECTS

The first effect of the application of logical positivist techniques by a young man whose mind is vigorous, able and enquiring, is to induce a thorough-going scepticism. The natural order has, he will conclude, no basis in a supernatural order from which it derives its meaning and its purpose. Values are without reality and morals without meaning.

The result of destroying traditional beliefs is thus to produce a waste-land of the mind, of which T. S. Eliot's poem is at once a description and, by implication, a denunciation. I say 'denunciation' for it is hard to read the poem without deploring the state which it describes, or deducing that the poet meant the reader to deplore it. But nature abhors a vacuum no less in the intellectual than in the physical sphere, and it is not easy for a young mind which is vigorous, able and enquiring, to remain indefinitely in this state of suspended belief. Sooner or later it will demand nourishment in the shape of

[1] *Man Against Myth* by Barrows Dunham (published by Frederick Muller, December 1948).

causes to uphold, creeds to believe, objects to revere and ends to pursue. Hence, the popularity in our own times of such objects of reverence and belief as the divine State, the Party, the Race, the *Volk*, and the Fatherland. Round these various objects have crystallised the creeds which are at once the distinction and the disgrace of our age: Fascism, Communism and Nationalism. Fascism is temporarily discredited, but Communism and Nationalism are the two idols upon whose altars the youth of our civilisation bids fair to be sacrificed.

There are, I think, two reasons why, when traditional values and beliefs go by the board, those that are undesirable tend to take their place. The first is that if those whose business it is to teach the young, conveying to them such wisdom as mankind has acquired in the past, disown their function on the ground that the wisdom is no wisdom at all, but is a meaningless mumbo-jumbo, other teachers will take their place. The late Professor Collingwood has in his autobiography described the consequences of this abandonment of their function by true, and its usurpation by false, teachers better than I can hope to do: 'Since one must not seek it from thinkers or from ideals or from principles, one must look (for guidance) to people who were not thinkers (but fools), to processes that were not thinking (but passion), to aims that were not ideals (but caprices), and to rules that were not principles (but rules of expediency).'

The second reason may be conveyed in the form of an analogy. It is a commonplace that the fallacy of Hedonism is not so much theoretical as practical, or is practical as well as theoretical. The secular wisdom of mankind teaches that pleasure should not be pursued directly; if it is, the results, men have found, are almost always disappointing. For pleasure, it seems, is not an end but a by-product; it tends to invest activities directed to ends other than pleasure. Of the widespread testimony to this effect, which has formed part of the common wisdom of mankind, the theory of pleasure in the Tenth book of Aristotle's Ethics is the classical statement.

As with happiness, so, I suggest, with belief. To believe something because you think it to be right is rational, and if it is, indeed, right salutary. To believe it, not because you think it to be right but because you think it right to believe something right, because you are suffering from an accumulating fund of unexpended credence is, perhaps, natural, but it is apt to be unsatisfying. Like the psychological hedonist theory of pleasure, this puts the cart before the horse. The natural order is (*a*) I see this to be the case; therefore (*b*) I will believe in it; the unnatural—the cart before the horse—is (*a*) I must believe in something; therefore (*b*) I will assert this to be the case. Now, beliefs which are embraced to satisfy a psychological need, and not because they are initially thought to be true, will tend to be unsatisfying as actions directed to securing pleasure instead of the achievement of some definite objective which is thought to be worthwhile, are unsatisfying.

Unsatisfying beliefs tend also to be violent beliefs. Again, the analogy with Hedonism is helpful. If it is held that pleasure is the only good, then, clearly, the more pleasure, the better. Hence, a life conducted according to the dictates of Hedonism will be a life devoted to the pursuit of violent satisfactions, just because quantitatively they are the most immediately satisfying. Similarly, if belief, belief for its own sake, belief, that is to say, which is embraced for the sake of believing, since not to believe anything is felt to be intolerable, and not truth is the end, the more belief, the better.

To put the point differently, if men believe in order to satisfy a psychological need, the more violent and intolerant the belief, the greater the satisfaction. Hence arises the group of violent and irrational beliefs that distinguish our own time. Men embrace the creeds of Fascism and Communism with an intolerant dogmatism which is a reflection less of the truth of the tenets they profess, than of their own need to feel them to be true. Clear-cut and dogmatic beliefs lend themselves to intolerant and violent advocacy and so satisfy the psychological needs which led to their adoption.

If there is any force in these considerations, it is no accident that ages of intolerant dogma violently maintained should so often have succeeded ages of moral scepticism and religious agnosticism. Sap the foundations of rational belief in God, in truth, in goodness and in beauty, as logical positivism cannot help but do, confine meaningful assertions to matters of empirical fact, and you sow the seeds of intolerance and dogmatism, as weeds spring up where a man cuts down a healthy crop, yet puts nothing in its place. Communism and Fascism are the natural by-products of scepticism and nihilism. Most men need a creed, and there is nothing in the empirical world upon which a creed can be based. For the empirical world contains nothing but the movements of matter, and these, though they can be observed, cannot be believed. It is, thus, no accident that logical positivism tends to undermine rational and to encourage irrational beliefs, and that the beliefs in Fascism and Communism should tend to spring up in the vacuum left by the erosion of the traditional objects of human belief, God and values.

CHARLES MADGE

PROPHYLACTIC

I want to draw off the waters of that well
That was internal to the strata of all time
I want to drink from that original spring
And I will share it with the rich and with the poor
Together we will taste it, and on our tongues
Those drops will be of the same quality
Transparent and fine out of the secret earth
Entering unmixed the channels of our blood
And active in every living finger-tip
So that all the traffic of the passages
Is resolved into a dewy constancy
And the building of offices, pursuit of trade,
Begetting, nurture and education of young
Is bathed in the freshness of the pure drop
As brilliant as a shop-front after rain
For otherwise shadowy vapours will blow
Their horned shapes to the viol of ancient craft
And will delude you, delude you, children,
With false fruits not coming from that well
But fetched from a semi-substance they call up
Out of the void between their rubbed hands
Rolling it out, coiling, a pale smoke
In which echoes of ruin dwell fleetingly
And they will way-lay you at the side door.
Then stand up, having drunk of the first spring
And opening your mouth take all in,
Do not refuse but, having bitten it
And extracted the inner sweetness of their kind,
Spit out the hard husk on to the cold floor.

One of the most versatile and talented of contemporary American short-story writers recounts in her concluding article her experiences in search of passion and truth

The Reading and Writing of Short Stories (II)

EUDORA WELTY

VI

THE plot of a short story in many instances is quite openly a projection of character. In a highly specialised instance, but a good example, the whole series of ghostly events in *The Turn of the Screw* may obviously be taken as a vision—a set of hallucinations of the governess who tells us the story. The story is a manufactured evidence against the leading character, in effect.

Not always does plot project character, even primarily. William Sansom, a young English writer, might be mentioned as one new writer who pays his highest respect to pure idea. Virginia Woolf, too, was at least as interested in a beam of light as she was in a tantrum.

In outward semblance, many stories have plots in common—which is of no more account than that many people have blue eyes. Plots are, indeed, what we see with. What's seen is what we're interested in.

On some level all stories are stories of search—which isn't surprising at all. From the intense wild penetration of the hunter in 'The Bear' by William Faulkner, to the gentle Sunday excursion of Katherine Mansfield's 'Miss Brill'; from the cruel errand of Nick's father to the Indian camp in Ernest Hemingway's story, to the fantasy of soaring into the realm of the poetic imagination in E. M. Forster's 'Celestial Omnibus'; from the fireman seeking the seat of the fire in William Sansom's 'Fireman Flower' to the Henry James man in 'The Jolly Corner' seeking, with infinite pains and wanderings, the image of himself and what he might have been, through the corridors of a haunted house—in any group of stories we might name as they occur to us, the plot is search. It is the ancient Odyssey and the thing that was ancient when first the Odyssey was sung. Joyce's *Ulysses* is the titan modern work on the specific subject, but when Miss Brill sits in the park, we feel an old key try at an old lock again—she, too, is looking. Our most ancient dreams help to convince us that her timid Sunday afternoon is the adventure of her life, and measure for us her defeat.

Corresponding to the search involved is always the other side of the coin. On one side of James's coin is search; on the other side is blight. Faulkner is concerned with doom and history, Hemingway with career, ritual, and fate—and so on. Along with search go the rise and fall of life, pride and the dust. And Virginia Woolf sees errand and all alike dissolving in a surpassing mystery.

When plot, whatever it does or however it goes, becomes the outward manifestation of the very germ of the story, then it is purest—then the narrative thread is least objectionable, then it is not in the way. When it is identifiable in every motion and progression of its own with the motions and progression of simple revelation, then it is at its highest use. Plot can be made so beautifully to reveal character, reveal atmosphere and the breathing of it, reveal the secrets of

hidden, inner (that is, 'real') life, that its very unfolding is a joy. It is a subtle satisfaction—that comes from where? Probably it comes from a deep-seated perception we all carry in us of the beauty of organisation—of that less strictly definable thing, of form.

Where does form come from—how do you 'get it'? My guess is that form is evolved. It is the residue, the thrown-off shape, of the very act of writing, as I look at it. It is the work, its manifestation in addition to the characters, the plot, the sensory impressions—it is the result of these, which comes to more than their mathematical total. It is these plus something more. This something more springs from the whole. It pertains to the essence of the story. From the writer's point of view, we might say that form is somehow connected with the process of the story's work—that form *is* the work. From the reader's point of view, we might say that form is connected with recognition; it is what makes us know, in a story, what we are looking at, what unique thing we are for a length of time intensely contemplating. It does seem that the part of mind which form speaks to and reaches is the memory.

VII

In stories today, form, however acutely and definitely it may be felt, does not necessarily imply a formal structure. It is not accounted for by structure, rather. A story with a 'pattern', an exact kind of design, may lack a more compelling overall quality which we call form. Edgar Allan Poe and other writers whose ultimate aim depended on pattern, on a perfect and dovetailing structure (note the relation to puzzles and to detection and mystery here), might have felt real horror at a story by D. H. Lawrence, first of all because of the unmitigated shapelessness of Lawrence's narrative. Lawrence's world of action and conversation is as far from the frozen perfection, the marble-like situations, of Poe as we can imagine; Lawrence's story world is a shambles—a world just let go, like a sketchy housekeeper's unstraightened-up room. More things are important than this dust, Lawrence would say, and he would be as right as the crier of that cry always is.

And what about his characters? Are they real, recognisable, neat men and women? Would you know them if you saw them? Not even, I think, if they began to speak on the street as they speak in the stories, in the very words—they would only appear as deranged people. For the truth seems to be that Lawrence's characters don't really speak their words—not conversationally, not to one another; they are *not* speaking on the street, but are playing like fountains or radiating like the moon or storming like the sea, or their silence is the silence of wicked rocks. It is borne home to us that Lawrence is writing of our human relationships on earth in terms of eternity, and these terms set Lawrence's form.

The author himself appears in authorship in phases like the moon, and sometimes blesses us and sometimes smites us while we stand there under him. But we see that his plots and his characters are alike sacrificed to something; there is something which Lawrence considers as transcending them both. Others besides him have thought that something does. But Lawrence alone, that I have knowledge of now, thinks the transcending thing is found direct through the senses. It is the world of the senses that Lawrence writes in, works in, thinks in, takes as his medium—and if that is strange to us, isn't the loss ours? Through this world he will send his story. It is the plot too; it is his story's reason for being, with sex the channel the senses most deeply, mysteriously, run through, cutting down through layers and centuries and country after country of hypocrisy.

Virginia Woolf presents an interesting variation of this conception; she was an intellectual. Extremely conscious of sex, she was intellectually or philosophically concerned with it. She could make a fantasy of her world, and her people could laugh. But the extreme beauty of her writing is due greatly to one fact, it seems to me: that the imprisonment of life in the word was as much a matter of the senses with her as it was a concern of the intellect. The scent, the

gesture, the breath moving from the lips, the sound of the hour striking in the clock, the rippling texture of surface in running water and flowing air—all these things she sought with all her being to apprehend, for they were the palpable shadows and coloured reflections of the abstract world of the spirit, the matter that mirrored the reality.

The impressionist dictum at one time that light is the most important actor in the picture can apply to the work of Virginia Woolf; here light does move frequently as a character and on business of its own, from scene to scene, and only itself remains unaffected by cruder and frailer human vision. In one story, 'The Searchlight', light is literally the main character.

But it has to be observed that in Mrs. Woolf's stories the beam of light arises not out of the unconscious but out of the conscious being. It is manipulated, like a wand; it touches and discriminates, from here to there, with precise, rather haughty, almost ladylike purpose, to illuminate quite clearly the particular in the abstract world. So near can the sensory come to the philosophic in her stories that the words 'breathing', 'breath', and the other words which mean this, give us the feeling of a creator ever consciously breathing life into the creation.

While Virginia Woolf uses her senses intellectually, Lawrence uses his intellect sensuously. And while Chekhov builds up character, Lawrence breaks down character. These opposites are perpetrated only in one interest, in getting at truth.

D. H. Lawrence is somewhat like the True Princess, who felt beneath forty mattresses that there was a pea under her. Lawrence is as sensitive to falsity as the True Princess was to the pea. And he is just as sure to proclaim the injury.

How can he be so quarrelsome with us while at the same time he is enrapturing us with his extraordinary powers to make us see and feel beauty? But my feeling toward his writing is my feeling toward greatness anywhere. Take it—take it all. It is no laughing matter. It is more pertinent to give in to that beauty of his and better to grit our teeth at his cruelty—for he is cruel—than to laugh at or be annoyed by the shambles he makes of the everyday world.

We all use the everyday world in our stories, and some of us feel inclined or even bound to give it at least a cursory glance and treatment, but Lawrence does not care. He feels no responsibility there at all. He does not care if the mechanics and props of everyday life suffer in his stories from distortion unto absurdity, if his narrative thins and frays away into silliness. Those things aren't what he's concerned with. His plots might remind you of some kind of tropical birds —that are awkward in structure and really impossible-looking when they're on the ground, and then when they take wing and fly, a miracle happens. All that clumsiness and outrageousness is gone; the bird's body becomes astonishingly functional, and iridescent in flight.

VIII

William Faulkner carries on a plot of development of a kind which I have not yet discussed. The more we read and write, the more clearly we see how many ways there are of *using material.* Some compile meticulously, adding and subtracting and getting a sum which is a story, and which could be graphed if required; sometimes Henry James, who uses this method, seems to be plotting, all exquisitely, graph after graph of different kinds of blights. Other writers distill material, getting clearer and purer essences as though by some boiling down process—Lawrence, for example. Faulkner seems to set upon his material and divine his stories from it.

The furious speed of Faulkner's stories is one of the marks of a divining writer. His stories seem to race with time, race with the world. You remember—who could forget? —one sentence of 1,600 words in 'The Bear'. How this skyscraper could race—like a dinosaur across the early fields of time—is something to teach us mainly that, in the world of our story-making, wonders never cease. But that sentence runs along with a strange time-encompassing quality of seeming all to happen at once; while we are

reading, we are still hearing the part behind, and the part before is being anticipated by means of its present part. It makes us realise how true it is that prose is a structure, in its every part—the imagination, by instinct or otherwise, is engineered when we write. A sentence can be in as perfect control as a bridge or a church. Not too obviously or too exquisitely perhaps, or the reader might start testing as he goes, which would be fatal to the story.

But the reason Faulkner's unwieldy-looking sentences can race is, of course, their high organisation—a musical organisation. And Faulkner is highly organised and his evocation does seem to come out of the place where music comes from. Don't let his turbulence ever blind us; his structure is there—daring structure. To me, above all other present-day storytellers, he is the one ahead of his time—the most astonishingly powered and passionate writer we have. 'The Bear' is an apocalyptic story of the end of the wilderness. It ends with the senseless clang on clang of a man idiotically pounding pieces of his broken gun together while, in the isolated gum tree over his head, forty or fifty squirrels are running frantically around. It signifies for one thing the arrival of the machine age and the squealing treadmill. The story encompasses past and future, all the past of the land from the Indian times on to this. It has towering heroic figures, wilderness figures, symbolic figures; and we get the knowledge in every happening of its happening again, over and over—and the marvellous whole world of the wilderness, the whole history of Mississippi.

For in 'The Bear', the structure of time is constantly in danger of being ripped away, torn down by the author—the *whole* time bulges at the cracks to get in to the present-time of the story. This dilation in time sense and intractability in space sense, the whole blown-up surface of the story, has of itself a kind of looming quality, a portentousness. Like the skin of a balloon, time and space are stretched to hold more, while the story remains in form and function itself.

It is this, most of all, that makes 'The Bear' a great deal more than a hunting story. It is a very long story, in five parts, and in Part IV the flimsy partition that keeps the story time apart from whole time flies away entirely. The entire history of the land and a people crowds into a chapter of an expansion, in sentence and paragraph, almost outrageous to the eye alone. Duration of time and extent of space, which always took the accusative case, and were disposed of that way, are let loose now—they are evoked, and tear through the story running backwards and forwards, up and down, into Indian times and the very future, like a pack of beasts from the world's wilderness itself. And this is the beauty of the story. Its self-destruction, self-immolation, is the way it transcends all it might have been, had it stayed intact and properly nailed together. There is its wonder.

Sherwood Anderson, it could be said, used this power of expansion in quite another sense in the Winesburg stories—whereby the uneventful and imprisoned life he saw around him became moving and tragic as though another dimension had been added when it passed through his passionate survey—like the same river flowing between deeper walls. In the case of 'The Bear', I feel that to Faulkner the escapement of wild time and place must have seemed one *attribute* of the thing he was describing, the lost attribute—just as to Anderson passion was the lost attribute of Winesburg—implicit in it and supplied now, in his stories.

IX

A story's major emphasis may fall on the things that make it up—on character, on plot, on its physical or moral world, in sensory or symbolic form. And perhaps the way this emphasis is let fall may determine the value of the story; may determine not how well it is written, but the worth of its being written.

The fine story-writers seem to be in a sense obstructionists, as if they hold back their own best interests. It's a strange illusion. For if we look to the source of the deepest pleasure we receive from a writer, how surprising it seems that this very source is the quondam obstruction. The fact is, in seeking

our source of pleasure, we have entered another world again. We are speaking of beauty.

And beauty is not a blatant or promiscuous or obvious quality; indeed at her finest she is somehow associated with obstruction —with reticence of a number of kinds. The beauty of 'The Bear' seems tied up intimately with the reluctance to confine the story to its proper time sequence and space measurements; Faulkner makes fantastic difficulty about time and place both, and the result is beauty. Time after time Lawrence refuses to get his story told, to let his characters talk in any natural way; the story is held up for ever, and through so delaying and through such refusal on the author's part, we enter the magical world of pure sense, of evocation—the shortest cut known through the woods.

Could it be that one who carps at difficulties in a writer ('Why didn't he write it like this? Why didn't he write another story?'), at infringements of the rules and lack of performance of duty, fails to take note of beauty? And fails to see straight off that beauty springs from deviation, from desire not to comply but to act inevitably, as long as truth is in sight, whatever that inevitability may mean?

Where does beauty come from, in the short story? Beauty comes from form, from development of idea, from after-effect. It often comes from carefulness, lack of confusion, elimination of waste —and yes, those are the rules. But that can be on occasion a cold kind of beauty, when there are warm kinds. And beware of tidiness. Sometimes spontaneity is the most sparkling kind of beauty—Katherine Mansfield had it. It is a fortuitous circumstance attending the birth of some stories, like a fairy godmother that has—this time—accepted the standing invitation and come smiling in.

Beauty may be missed or forgotten sometimes by the analysers because it is not a means, not a way of getting the story along, or furthering a thing in the world. For beauty is a result—as form is a result. It *comes*. We are lucky when beauty comes, for often we try, but then, when the virtues of our story are counted, beauty is standing behind the door. I think it may be wrong to try for beauty; we should try for other things, and then hope.

Intensity and beauty are qualities that will come out of man's imagination and out of his passion—which use sensitivity for their finding and focusing power. (This can't beg the question quite so hopelessly as assigning the best stories to genius.) It seems to be true that, for practical purposes, in writing a story, beauty is in greatest accord with sensitivity.

The two things that cannot be imitated—beauty and sensitivity—are or may be kin to each other. But there is only one of them we can strive for. Sensitivity in ourselves. It is our technique. In the end, our technique is sensitivity, and beauty may be our reward.

A short-story writer can try anything. He has tried anything—but presumably not everything. Variety is, has been, and no doubt will remain, endless in possibilities, because the power and stirring of the mind never rests. It is what this power will try that will most pertinently define the short story. Not rules, not æsthetics, not problems and their solution. It is not rules as long as there is imagination; not æsthetics as long as there is passion; not success as long as there is intensity behind the effort that calls forth and communicates, that will try and try again.

And at the other end of the stories is the reader. There is no use really to fear 'the reader'. The surly old bugaboo who wants his money's worth out of a magazine—yes, he is there (or I suspect it is a she, still wanting her money's worth and having yet to be convinced she's got it); but there is another reader, too, perhaps with more at stake.

Inescapably, this reader exists—the same as ourselves; the reader who is also a user of imagination and thought. This reader picks up a story, maybe our new story, and behold, sees it fresh, and meets it with a store-house of hope and interest.

And, reader and writer, we can wish each other well. Don't we, after all, want the same thing? A story of beauty and passion and truth?

ANDRÉ MALRAUX

THE DEMON OF THE ABSOLUTE

A STUDY OF T. E. LAWRENCE (2)

This is the second of two articles discussing the artistic failure of the SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM, *and the implications of this failure upon its author*

'*The whole end is an Anti-Climax.*' Perhaps at first it was because he no longer knew at the moment of writing where the end of this epic was leading. But a Melville or even a Conrad might have found beyond the atmosphere which Lawrence had perhaps attained the supreme source of poetry which makes of disillusion and despair not paralysis, but tragedy. Solitude and inner failure, the vanity of epics are also powerful means of art. What he had not attained was that transfiguration which would have wrenched up even his memories, to found them in significance and bring them within reach of the eternal.

And the Revolt was only the frame of an *Ecce Homo*, flagellated like that other, torn like that other. Lawrence had begun to write after Feisal's speech to the Conference as an apparent appeal to history against injustice, and as a real appeal to art against absurdity. It was not only the Revolt which he meant to save from absurdity, but his own action, his own destiny. The sole means which the mind has of escaping from the absurd is to carry the world along with it, to conceive it and express it. Gradually, without the frame changing, the Revolt had passed to the background, and in the foreground had arisen the absurdity of life for the man whom an irreducible difference, and the meditation it imposes, had reduced to solitude. The subject of the book which he believed himself to be writing had become the struggle of a being mercilessly scourged by the contempt he felt for certain aspects of himself, by a fatality experienced with excruciating humiliation as a permanent weakness of his will—against the frantic resolution of this same being to kill his demon by dint of conquest and lucidity. '*I wrote my will across the sky in stars . . .*'

The Turks evicted, Feisal in Damascus, himself the legendary figure of a legend that was at once exciting and derisory—and weary to death except of those pages which were decomposing in his hands—was he wrong to believe such a struggle worthy of the Brothers Karamazov? That he had paid the heaviest price for his revelation, whether this difference came from some blemish in his character or not, affects neither its value nor its truth; there is no man, even among the sanest, who can found his life on the spirit if he does not escape from his meditations at the right moment. Man is absurd because he is not the master of time or anguish, or Evil; the world is absurd because it is inseparable from Evil, and Evil is the sin of the world.

This drama should have been expressed by all that had separated Lawrence from the Arab movement; but his account was of everything which should have attached him to it. What had in truth separated him from the Revolt, what he should have expressed for his book to be great, was that all human action is defiled by its very nature. The portrait he had wished to draw was that of a flayed man who regards all that he was, or might have been, with the embittered lucidity of an unbeliever in life.

But it seemed that his only care had been to mask this man as effectively as he had

hidden the secret animator of the Revolt. In order to follow, as he had resolved, the order of his war diary, he had started his tale with his landing at Jeddah; and, re-reading it after having written the first six books, he felt himself so completely detached from it that he had added an introduction to it during his flight towards Cairo. In this he had said in clear but abstract language what he had wanted to say: that at first he was carried away by the call of freedom and that he dedicated himself so well to its service that he ceased to exist; that he lived under the constant threat of torture; that his life had been crossed unceasingly by strange longings that were fanned by privations and danger; that he was incapable of subscribing to the beliefs that he was stirring up in order to put them to the service of England in her war; that they had all felt the need for degradation; that he ceased to believe in his civilisation and in every other, until he no longer knew anything but an intense solitude to the limit of madness; that what he remembered more were '*the agony, the terrors and the mistakes*'.

Where were these terrors, these mistakes and this degradation? Every priest knows that an abstract confession costs but little. The concrete confession here would have consisted in picturing himself during the mistake, to embody himself in the phantom which was saying 'I'. Having finished his first account, he had again felt how much of what his introduction had announced was missing from his book. All through his text it seemed to him that he was chasing himself. Then he had written his own portrait, that crisis of introspection precipitated by his thirtieth birthday. This showed a figure indeed clear and more cruel, but still abstract: his modesty engendered by his physique and his unlikeness to it; the constant split in his self which set up in him and for him '*a standing court martial*'; his pride; his desire for glory and for attractiveness, his contempt for that desire; his implacable will; his distrust of ideas, his need for escaping from the mind, his agonised curiosity about himself which led him to try and see himself through other people's eyes; his lack of all faith and his strength; his need of degradation (in the first person this time); his disgust such that '*it was only weakness which delayed me from mind-suicide*'; finally and above all, '*the truth was I did not like the "myself" I could see and hear.*'

It was this man who said: '*Feisal was a brave, weak, ignorant spirit, trying to do work for which only a genius, a prophet or a great criminal, was fitted. I served him out of pity, a motive which degraded us both.*' The *Seven Pillars*, however, did not cease to show the contrary. The introduction was an introduction to his secret memoirs much more than to his book; his drama, his portrait were written in its margins, and the embodiment of this portrait alone would have made of the *Seven Pillars* not an historical fresco, but a book of the order (if not of the genius) of the *Brothers Karamazov* and of *Zarathustra*, the great denunciatory work of which he had dreamt.

GRADUALLY, because all these struggles had culminated in a tardy and dreary victory, and above all, because in his deepest struggle art had insensibly supplanted action, the Arab epic had become in his mind the means of a grandiose expression of human nothingness. Thus, '*I have written this to show what a man can do*', secret echo of his fits of anger in Paris, was replaced by: '*I wrote this to show what the Gods can make of us*', together with the bitter sound of the two words he added as a sub-title: '*A Triumph*'.

For the Absolute, triumph is derisory, but so, too, is the triumphant one. Lawrence had felt that only too well, and therein lay the secret meaning of scenes like those at the hospital and at Deraa. The lucid portrait of a man drawn by himself—if indeed there were a single man in the world capable of being completely lucid in the recounting of his life—would be the most virulent denunciation of the Gods that could be conceived: and so much the greater as the man himself was great. The lucid hero, if he penetrates at all into this forbidden territory, has no other choice than between absurdity and original sin. But to say 'Behold the

Man!' is only an expression of the human mystery, in so far as he utters more than a reticent confession.

Lawrence's nature was opposed to confession by the violence both of his pride and of his modesty—at least of that modesty which is born of the fear of putting the reader in a superior position, that modesty possessed by the characters of Russian novels, whom the frequency of public confession does not deliver from the obsessing fear of ridicule; and also that he thought of almost everything he had attained as negligible or, at least, as certainly less important than what he had dreamt of attaining. He had received fifty-eight wounds, but mentioned three or four of them; his correspondence shows, as a whole, singularly more nobility than he admits to in the *Seven Pillars* (with the exception of the resolution to be sparing with the lives of his fighters). He said he remembered his mistakes first of all, and yet he showed hardly any of them (some failures, yes, but these are not without greatness); he said he had undertaken his campaign for love of one of his comrades, but this comrade he suppressed.

He thought for a moment of re-writing his book once more. But how could he have done so? Those pages had been written first of all by whipping his memory with sleeplessness six months after the capture of Damascus. Having then lost them, he had reconstituted them with an exhausting effort. Corrections would not have changed their perspective: it would have been necessary to re-write everything and thus lose that blade-like tension which at least gave it some value as historical testimony that now seemed so vain to him. Why should the demon who had paralysed him twice be vanquished the third time? That demon was himself.

And a more subtle poison still emanated from those pages which were decomposing between his fingers. Profoundly as he was involved in the artistic success of this book, he was not only involved in that. Whoever writes his memoirs (unless merely to charm) must judge himself. There were in this book, as in all memoirs, two characters: the one who said 'I', and the author. What Lawrence had done was embodied in the leading character, that is, in the writer. It was the writer (not as artist, but as judge) who should have allowed Lawrence to subjugate his legend instead of living subjugated by it, who, on the intellectual plane, should have served the exemplary Lawrence just as on the moral plane he had been served by the refusal of all gain.

It was no longer a question of literary talent, but of existence, of human density. Lawrence knew that a writer's greatness lies less in what he preaches than in the place from which he speaks; that Tolstoy depicting a wounded man gazing at the nocturnal clouds of Austerlitz, or the commonplace official, Ivan Illitch, facing death, is no less great than Dostoievsky making the Grand Inquisitor speak. A Tolstoy would have drawn from the death of the humblest Arab soldier the grand and bitter meaning of the Revolt because he had Tolstoy's talent, but, above all, because he was Leo Nicolayevitch. The force of Christ's answer in front of the adultress does not come from the Evangelists' talent. Lawrence's book was, in the highest sense of the word, a test. And the demon of the absurd re-appeared under the cruellest guise: if Lawrence had not expressed the man he thought he was, was it not simply because he was not that man?

And if he was not that man, he was nothing.

But what, then, was that man that he judged himself *Guilty* for not being? He was the mould of the exemplary figure which the legend was driving Lawrence to substitute for Lawrence of Arabia, if only for his own sake. And he knew only too well what this figure was not, and very little what it was. Modern individualism demands a hero, but does not conceive his image. Apart from art, Zarathustra is not the greatest strength, but the greatest weakness of Nietzsche.

The idea of a great personality covers two human types. The first is that of the man who has accomplished great things and who,

one supposes, is ready to accomplish others in different spheres. This type becomes less and less convincing because action becomes more and more bound up with technique, whereas a great personality implies the attainment of a point from whence all techniques are dominated; the modern dream, like the most ancient, is that dictators should be strategists, but this it does not believe to be possible. History seems to us less and less a guarantee of greatness. Lawrence thought he now knew how easily men have lent great personalities to those who have only met with great destinies.

The other figure is more complicated because many different types are mingled in it. But it comes entirely from the domain to which Lawrence owed his formation and his dreams—to that of literature. To his imagination, as to ours, Nietzsche was not a professor whom his mother called Fritz and who, otherwise, wrote great books that were but little known; Dostoievsky was not a Russian man of letters who was poor in health and gambled; each of them, first of all, was a mythical personage born of all the writings he had signed, just as a character in a novel emerges from all the words with which the author endows him. The dreams we have of such personalities give them an imaginary aptitude to answer what they have written to the questions put to them by life and men. They have a reply for everything because they have only one reply. They have reached a spiritual summit which dominates almost all its approaches and, if they were to become equal to their genius, would dominate their acts as well. Now this 'summit' has but one name—it is truth. A great personality in this rather vague domain where art and thought are mingled is a man by whom an essential truth is expressed.[1]

But the relation which unites Nietzsche to the exemplary Nietzsche as drawn by death is always hypothetical, and a great thought only brings, at the best, the presumption of a great personality. This lies much less within the compass of his intellectual powers than in their incarnation. It is rare that a martyr to his mind does not give us the impression of a considerable personality at a time when he might only give us the certainty of his resolution. It is that the great living personality lies exactly in the bond between thought and deed. He who dies according to his thought suggests that he might have known how to live in the same way. The great personality such as Lawrence vaguely conceived—such as many of us vaguely conceive—was an embodied truth that had become living: Nietzsche become Zarathustra. He did not dream of prestige but of the possession of its fullness—what he had longed for most ardently in the world and what was remotest from him.

He had always been profoundly at variance with himself. '*I was very conscious of the bundled powers and entities within me; it was their character which hid.*' This was what he thought in Arabia. And this dislocation was not one of the least elements of his strength when it threw him into action; out of action it was nothing but suffering. What fascinated him, without his fully realising it, was the existence of this centre whose absence was intolerable to him, of this invincible density that Dostoievsky had expressed above all else in his *staretz* Zossima.

This profound and complete identity of the being with itself obsessed him because he felt it capable of granting what he had successively demanded from action and art—the power to overcome the feeling of man's dependence. But this supreme conscience, if it is not necessarily Christian, is without doubt necessarily religious. The great personality as Lawrence conceived him is the saint or the prophet—minus God. Goethe had never interested him, and Shakespeare was for him the '*Poet's self*', but a '*second-rate intelligence*'. The tragic man has nothing to do with wisdom; tragedy could not be for him a phase of life, nor a trial on the way to serenity: for body or soul in him is incurable. He does not seek serenity but invulnerability. Zossima is invulnerable. The English judge who condemned Gandhi consulted him on the sentence (very heavy otherwise) that he was going to inflict on

[1] *The wise man belongs to this domain. Benevolent or austere, the mastery he exercises over his passions can only be so in the name of truth, even though this might be the certainty that all is vanity. The wise man whose image—that of Socrates—Plato has for centuries imposed on men, owed to his care for witnessing the truth a few celebrated worries and the essential core of his prestige. And who does not realise that Montaigne, Renan and Goethe, in order to defend their truth with less firmness, did not defend it with less conviction than Pascal his.?*

him, and nevertheless added, 'Even your adversaries consider you as a man of high ideals, of a noble, and even saintly life. . . . ' And even if he had insulted him, then nothing would have been changed.

But such personalities are completely animated by the terrible strength of that humility of which Dostoievsky spoke; far from being the individual's possession of himself, they are his total loss. He has been consumed in the fire with which he wished to burn his inner self, and he flames in communion with his metamorphosis.

Now Lawrence, one of the most religious minds of his time, if one means by religious to feel in the very depths of one's soul the anguish of being a man—Lawrence who had received a religious education in England, who had followed Jesuit classes in France, whose mother and brother were missionaries, who called the Brothers Karamazov the fifth gospel—has not written fifty lines on Christianity in the nine hundred crowded pages of his letters (nor in his books). There was within him, beneath his pride, if not humility, at least a violent and intermittent inclination to humiliate himself, sometimes by discipline and sometimes by veneration; the horror of respectability; the disgust for property, for money, a disinterestedness which of itself took the form of Charity; a profound consciousness of his guilt, set about with its angels and minor demons; of Evil and of the nothingness of nearly all that men cling to; the need of the Absolute, the instinctive taste for asceticism. He seemed one of those whom Jesus, eternally crucified, wrests among all others from the extremes of solitude. But he believed no more in their religion than he believed now in their civilisation. And there was in him an Anti-Christian of the first order; it was only from himself that he expected forgiveness. He sought not appeasement but victory, a peace gained by conquest. '*One of the saddest things in life is to reach the point of discovering one's own insufficiency. I despise your "all-buts". I don't compare myself to people of my own mind. Somewhere there must be an Absolute; that is the only thing that counts: and I can't succeed in finding it. Hence this impression of existence without an object.*'

'*Something eternal abides in man—in the man who thinks . . . It is his ability to put the universe in question . . .*'—Malraux

The Absolute is the Supreme Court for the tragic man, the only efficacious one because it alone can burn—even though the whole man burns with it—the most profound feeling of dependence, the remorse of being oneself.

Profiles in

An aggressive defence

RICHARD WINDLE

Labour Organiser

FROM a long, sunless room on the third floor of Transport House, 'Dick' Windle runs the intricate machine on which British Labour relies for victory at the next election. He sits, bulky and fatherly, at the corner of a long table, with pictures of 'the boys' on the wall behind him and five empty chairs facing him, expectantly it seems.

Windle is sixty-one; he looks fifty and acts even younger. An ex-building trade apprentice from Walthamstow, he has boundless energy, the manner of a big executive and none of the propagandist's manufactured blather. In words and attitude, he is sober, matter-of-fact, tactful but firm. A party member for over forty years, he has been National Organiser for three years, after being assistant to George Shepherd for seventeen.

'For a party which is made up of the Socialist movement, the Trade Unions and the Co-operative movement,' Windle explains, 'the Labour Party today is more united than ever.' And he looks as though he does quite a lot of the uniting himself. From Transport House, his organisation runs through eleven regional councils to 250 full-time constituency agents and countless voluntary workers. He has trained them, nurtured them, built them up in the past three years, spending seven months in re-organisation after the re-distribution of seats. Some two hundred and fifty candidates have now been picked; for the other constituencies, it is a matter of simple re-selection. 'Everyone,' Windle says, 'works hard.' He himself does so sixteen hours a day. For Labour's men, the campaign motto is 'Aggressive defence' and, says Windle figuratively rolling up his sleeves, 'We are ready any time.' Standing primly on the edge of the cool, tree-shaded Smith Square, Transport House has many doors: one is for the T.U.C., one for the Co-operative Movement, a third for the Party. But today, on the eve of the Election, all corridors lead to Windle's door.

A united attack

THOMAS WATSON

Conservative Man

HE is genial, unspectacular and easy going. As an organiser, his colleagues say, he is superb. His opponents say little but keep their ears to the ground, for in the game of politics, 'Tommy' Watson of the Conservative Party has few equals.

He has been in politics since 1910. The first election he fought, that of 1919, brought victory. The last, also after a war, brought defeat and a certain amount of disorganisation. Watson got right back to work. 'The first job,' he says, 'was to find agents. We got them mostly from the ranks of ex-servicemen. They were eager and they knew what they wanted. They went through twelve months' training and three examinations.' Then came the membership drives. In 1946, there were 911,000 party members. The first drumroll collected a quarter of a million, while the second provided a million more. Today, there are two and a half million Conservative party members in the country.

'Leadership and team spirit' was Watson's organisational motto in the great fight to streamline the party machinery from the Central Office, through twelve area agents in England and Wales, to candidates, local organisers and Young Conservative units. Few candidates nowadays pay their own expenses.

Most remarkable in the Tories' campaign are the Young Conservatives, and the effort to spread the printed word. The young Conservatives need little prompting to organise themselves. They are the shock troops, the canvassers, the foot sloggers, and their help is invaluable. Tory propaganda lays emphasis on the party's new found agressiveness and vitality. At the election, the Conservatives will fight every seat in the country. 'It will be a maximum effort all along the line.'

Miniature

GREVILLE COLLINS

Liberal Spirit

A splitting drive

AFTER the long eclipse of the Liberal Party, one might be entitled to ask: 'What does a Liberal look like?' In forty-three-year-old Greville Collins, big businessman and individualist, lie several answers. He is a man who believes passionately in Liberalism. 'It is not a lost cause,' he says, 'or a hazy theory. Since 1929, the party has been reborn. Now people will see that it is strong and virile.'

Collins started life in Felixstowe, moved to school in Hereford, and became an apprentice draper at fifteen. He soon abandoned that to speculate in property with a small inheritance. Soon, he was building houses. He built 10,000 of them during the war, wherever they were needed. Since then, his concern has put up 70,000 aluminium prefabs up and down the country.

Now he spends four hours a day in his handsome Mayfair office and fourteen hours for Liberalism in the Westminster H.Q. He is tall, handsome, with a ready wit and the assurance of the self-made man. He has a house in Park Lane, another in Wiltshire; he collects Bristol glass, paintings; goes hunting, fishing, and gardening with zest when he has time.

Though it is hard to organise Liberals, Greville Collins appears to have done it. 'There is only one way to organise,' he says, 'and that is to drive people.' His party has between 600,000 and 1,000,000 members, local organisations in 520 constituencies, working full speed ahead. Candidates are all primed and ready, though, he admits, 'we would prefer a May election to an October one.' He himself is candidate for Cheltenham.

To Labour and Conservative assertions that the Liberals tend to split the vote, Greville Collins assertively replies: 'That's exactly what we intend to do. Split the vote. It's time the Liberals were back.' There are few slogans at the H.Q. of the Liberals. There is just an atmosphere of 'all right-thinking individuals work together'.

PETER KERRIGAN

Communist Agent

An unlimited hope

JUST across a narrow street from one of London's most advertised outfitters stands an unostentatious three-storey building whose ground floor, adorned with modern glass bricks, bears no mercantile label. It is the headquarters of the Communist Party of Great Britain, membership 40,000. Busier than ever today is its organising brain, Peter Kerrigan.

At fifty, with a mop of unruly hair, an engaging smile and a thick Glasgow accent, Kerrigan is very 'simpatico'. Born in the Gorbals, he contested the seat at a by-election and will do so again—he is a veteran of thirty years of Marxist struggles, hunger marches on London, innumerable strikes and a sojourn in the Soviet Union.

'The Communist Party', says Kerrigan, 'is pretty effectively prepared' for an election at any time. Out of the 100 candidates it intends to put up, eighty have been chosen. Its programme, deliberately called 'The Socialist Road for Britain', has been issued with much rhetorical fanfare. Its clarion call, 'Fight the Slump, Raise the Standard of Living, Make the Rich Pay', goes hand in hand with demands for a cut in the armed forces, a sharp increase in profits tax, a capital levy, and nationalisation of pretty well everything.

The party machine, thanks largely to Kerrigan, is ruthlessly efficient. In at least two aspects it differs greatly from others. Its strength lies not in towns or areas as a whole but in its industrial cells, of which there are 1,300. Secondly, it has no 'sleeping' members. Each member, who pays fourpence per week, must actively work for the party.

Kerrigan's main headache is finance. Finding the deposit money for 100 candidates, ninety-eight per cent of which will be poured down the bottomless sink of defeat, is a hard, thankless task.

The opening of the Radio Exhibition at Olympia has focused attention on an important British industry. Here we present—

THE WAY TO SAVE OUR TELEVISION

MAURICE GORHAM

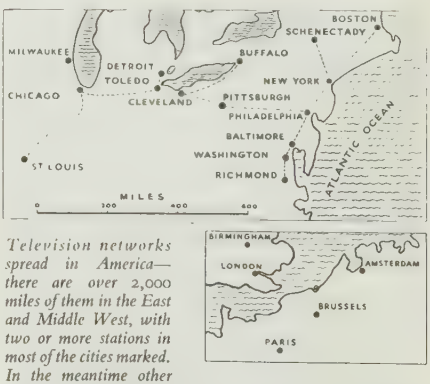
First Post-War Head of B.B.C. Television

EVER since 1936 we in Britain have been very proud of our television. We tell each other that it is the best in the world. True, we haven't very much of it, but look how good the programmes are! But, we add, with an uneasy glance towards America, we must be careful not to lose our lead.

We are still saying this in 1949, but we might get on faster if we stopped saying it and looked the facts in the face. The television service that led the world in 1936 is fast falling behind, and the urgent thing is to get it ahead again.

However good our programmes are (and some of them are excellent; others are pretty terrible), it is not much use having them unless people can see them. We have afternoon and evening programmes from Alexandra Palace, which people within a range of sixty miles or so can see. Even then, they cannot cover subjects more than thirty miles from the station, so things that happen at Oxford and Cambridge, Brighton or Aldershot, cannot figure on the television screen. The second station, near Birmingham, is due to be opened this autumn, after repeated postponements; the link with London that will bring it most of its programmes was begun before the war. Beyond Birmingham all is blank. Nobody knows when television will reach the North and Scotland, the West and Wales.

Now look at the American scene. Since the war, stations have been springing up all over the United States; there were fifty at the end of 1948, sixty-four this spring; 100 are due by the end of the year. Many cities have two or three stations; big centres like New York and Chicago may have five or six. More than 2,000 miles of networks link these stations throughout the East and Middle West, so they can exchange programmes, and events happening in New York and Washington can be seen in Boston and St. Louis. Big stations record their programmes on film and send them to



Television networks spread in America—there are over 2,000 miles of them in the East and Middle West, with two or more stations in most of the cities marked. In the meantime other stations are opening throughout the United States, depending upon their own resources for their programmes until the network catches up. In the part of Europe shown on the same scale there are stations only in London and Paris, and the only link under construction is between London and Birmingham.

From *Television* by Maurice Gorham, courtesy Percival Marshall.

stations that are not yet on the network and cannot receive them direct. Television sets are being made by the million. There will be two million in use by the end of the year, as against the 200,000 that is the most we can hope for here.

The best American programmes are not as good as our best, but they give a lot of entertainment to their viewers, and (despite the comments of some B.B.C. spokesmen) their televising of sports events is amazingly slick. Viewers get more programmes and more choice; in New York one station or another is on the air at most times of the day. Their equipment is mostly more modern than ours, and they do not suffer from the danger of breakdowns that haunts producers and viewers here. The network is spreading fast, but television is spreading faster. Cities do not wait until the network reaches them before they open a station. They start with their own resources, and by the time the network comes, they can contribute programmes to it as well as taking programmes from it. If Glasgow and Newcastle and Manchester and Cardiff were in the United States, they would certainly not have to do without television until they are reached by a network that has taken all these years to cover the first hundred miles.

Television has its troubles in America as it has here, but it has already been proved that most people would rather see even a bad programme than hear even a good one. (That seems to be true here too, but fewer people have had the choice.) America presents an example of television on the move, whereas in Britain it is virtually standing still.

The result of all this is that America is becoming the headquarters of television, as this country was once. With new customers coming into the field every day, American manufacturers are busy turning out transmitters, cameras, mobile units, and receiving sets on a scale undreamt-of here. The British industry is putting up a great fight for the export market, but it is fighting against odds.

Yet Britain has enormous advantages.

Erecting the mast of the relay station at Sutton Coldfield, near Birmingham, Britain's first new station since 1936. BBC

This is a small country, densely populated; our big cities are within hundreds instead of thousands of miles, and six or seven stations could cover seventy-five per cent of the population. We had a long start in technical and production skill, and the large staff at Alexandra Palace still forms the greatest assembly of television talent in the world. We have public money to finance television in the necessarily long interval before it can pay for itself. We have early prospects of exchanging programmes with the European countries close to our coasts . . . France, Holland, and Belgium will soon all be in the television field . . . and we have the English-speaking Dominions as potential customers for export of programmes as well as equipment. We are still well placed to go ahead.

Of course this country is not so rich as the U.S.A. and it has faced far more problems since the war. But if we can't afford to run television properly, we might as well say so and drop it altogether. That would be a bitter decision to take, for it would mean throwing away a long record of British pioneering, scrapping a vast amount of technical skill and experience that served us well during the war, and virtually abandoning hope of establishing an export market. It would also mean depriving the British people of a medium for information and

ENGLAND. *Production of plays at Alexandra Palace has reached a very high level, despite lack of rehearsal time, inadequate studios, and too-frequent technical breakdowns. Here is a scene in the studio during the televising of Diana Morgan's* A House in the Square. *BBC*

AMERICA. *Studio production in America has been even more cramped for studio space than in England, and plays have also had to be cut rigidly to an hour with commercial announcements interspersed. Here a sponsored play is being produced in the NBC studios in New York.* *NBC*

INDOOR TELEVISION

entertainment that is destined to be to the next generation what sound broadcasting was to the last; for, however skilful the broadcasters, there are few things that are not better appreciated by eye and ear together than by the ear alone.

It would be a disaster to drop television. But it is becoming a disaster to keep it permanently at half-cock, spending a million pounds or more every year and letting hundreds of highly skilled people work against heart-breaking difficulties to provide a luxury for 200,000 viewers. If television is to survive, it must spread so that more people in more parts of the country can see it and so that its programmes can cover more things. The faster it spreads, the sooner sets will become cheap enough to bring it to a mass audience and the sooner the licence revenue will begin to meet the costs. And as the home market flourishes, the industry will have a fair chance with the export trade.

It is not too late to save our television, and the opportunity is at hand. Since 1935 nobody has been allowed to touch television except the B.B.C., but the B.B.C.'s monopoly depends on its Charter, and the Charter expires in 1951. The Beveridge Committee is now investigating what ought to happen after that. One of the things it will have to consider is whether television should not be taken out of the B.B.C. monopoly and entrusted to some body with no vested interest in sound broadcasting, which could fight its battles with a whole heart and a single mind.

THE B.B.C. and the Government are busy blaming each other for the present lack of progress, but the real key to the trouble is that, in running television, the B.B.C. is competing with itself. It has achieved a great position and an enormous revenue by sound broadcasting, and now television threatens to upset everything and make it start learning all over again, with the knowledge that, as viewing waxes, listening will wane. The common impression among television men has always been that the B.B.C. knew it had to have television but didn't want to have too much of it, and so long as nobody else can start it, the decision as to how much there shall be is in the B.B.C.'s hands.

That view is reinforced by the B.B.C.'s declared policy: to wait for each provincial station until the network can reach it and send programmes down the line from London. It is even more strongly reinforced by its practice: by the delay in finding new studios or re-equipping Alexandra Palace, in developing film recording of television, in making a real effort to break the dead-locks with sports promoters, theatres, music-halls, and films.

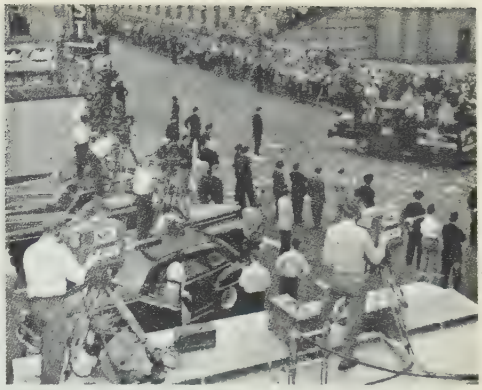
There is plenty of colour for the suspicion that the B.B.C.'s real feeling about television is 'It's bound to come . . . but it need not come in our time.'

Suppose television is taken away from the B.B.C. and a new independent authority is put in charge. Not without conditions, of course. When the original British Broadcasting Company got its monopoly of broadcasting in 1922, it got it on condition that it opened a certain number of stations in a certain time. No waiting for the network in those brave days. The British Broadcasting Corporation got its monopoly of television in 1935 without any such condition, and this is a mistake that should not be made again.

THE new body would have no easy task, but here is one way it might set about it. There is no need nowadays to build such elaborate stations as Alexandra Palace. What you need for a television service in its first stages is a transmitter and mast, a couple of film scanners, and a mobile unit; new stations in America are starting with no more than that. For a little more money you can add a film unit and a small studio for interviews, demonstrations, etc., which need not be permanently equipped. With that sort of set-up in, say, Glasgow or Cardiff, you could televise all the local events within range of the station, including sport, concerts and plays, and interviews with local personalities, visiting celebrities, and so on. You could use any films Alexandra Palace uses now (and it uses plenty). Your own film unit can tour the country outside the range of the mobile unit, getting news and interest pictures for your own station, and any that are of more than local interest can be sent on to be used by the other stations in their turn. And once television recording is a matter of routine, you can transmit all the studio shows from Alexandra Palace that are worth recording, and they will be none the worse for being seen on the following day.

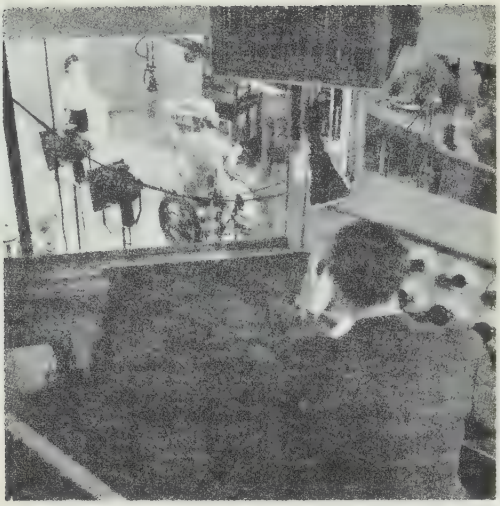
Stations like this could be opened in the cities beyond Birmingham as soon as they could be built. They can work on their own until the network from London finally reaches them, and when it does, they will be able to contribute to it as well as taking programmes from it. But does anybody imagine that the people of Glasgow or Manchester would rather do without television until then? They did not have to wait for their radio in 1922.

The first job of a new television authority would be to open new stations, but there would be a lot for it to do in London too. It would have to modernise studios and equipment, get rid of the present



AMERICA. *Televising of outside events made great strides in America after the war, when more sensitive cameras were brought into use. This American Legion parade was still being televised after nightfall, when pre-war television would have had to close down.* *NBC*

ENGLAND. *Outside broadcasts have always been popular with British viewers but they have only recently been aided by post-war cameras. These are seen in the picture covering play on the Centre Court during the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Championships of 1949.* *BBC*



Looking down into the studio from the Control Gallery, where the producer sits with his sound and vision mixers. BBC

limitations and the recurrent breakdowns, promote research instead of talking about it, tackle the copyright question which now so severely restricts what television can do. Most urgent of all, it would have to give television the resource of recording, so that a programme once televised can be used again at home and overseas: a task with which the B.B.C. has been toying since 1945.

The new authority might be a public corporation like the B.B.C., though independent of it. It could be financed just as the television service is now . . . out of the total funds allocated to broadcasting by the Government, which now takes the licence money and gives the B.B.C. what it thinks it needs according to the job it has to do. It could as easily give the television money to the new authority as to the B.B.C. Sooner or later (and very late at the present rate of progress) television must pay for itself, and it would be the television authority's responsibility to achieve this as soon as possible, but in the meantime it must be subsidised, as it is now. It might be fairer to do this openly, by a Grant in Aid such as now pays for the B.B.C.'s overseas services; but however it was done, the public would at least know how much was being spent on it. You can't find out from the published accounts of the B.B.C.

But the television authority might not frown on commercial enterprise. In America it was the radio manufacturers rather than the broadcasting organisations who spent their money on television and started the boom. The manufacturers might well have some say in the new authority; or it could be open to a manufacturer to apply for a licence to build a station in any area that has not got one now. The 'wired wireless' companies might help to spread television too. Private ownership of stations need not involve sponsored programmes, but the possibility of sponsorship has always been admitted since the Selsdon Report on television in 1935. Viewing habits have not yet been fixed as listening habits have, and sponsored programmes might ultimately prove to be the solution of television costs, which are still a problem in any country. The decision could safely be left to a television authority responsible only to Parliament, unfettered by the interests of sound broadcasting and the traditions handed down from the Founding Fathers of the B.B.C.

One thing is certain: a new body, solely devoted to television, that tackled its problems with real determination and zest, would put new heart into the television staff and the television manufacturers, who now suffer from chronic frustration and the feeling that television is fighting a sham battle. If television can become live and vigorous, and show signs of spreading as radio did in the twenties, the export trade will have a chance to flourish, and Britain will once again be ahead of the world.

But there is more to television than national prestige or the export trade. It is the final form of broadcasting, bringing information and entertainment ten times more varied and convincing, because you can see as well as hear. Once it improves its resources and the range from which it can draw its programmes, it will bring to home life an enrichment greater even than radio brought when first it came. It is the medium of the new age, and our people should not be kept waiting for it until it suits a monopolistic policy to bring it to them. A new medium calls for new energy and enterprise, and it is time television was allowed to profit by them, wherever they are to be found.

A WAR OF WORDS

PATRICK BALFOUR

On the wall at the entrance to the Casbah at Algiers, that steep, cobbled hive of humanity, with its odour of refuse and spice, an English inscription survives: 'Off Limits. Out of Bounds'. Above it, scrawled roughly in chalk, are words in French: 'Down with every Statute! Let the People speak!' Today the first inscription seems almost as remote to the Arab as the Roman inscriptions at Carthage, surviving from other wars. The second reflects his struggle of the moment: a war of words. It is waged, with varying intensity, not only in Algeria, a department of France, which she has occupied since 1830, but in the protectorates of Tunisia and Morocco, which she has occupied since 1881 and 1912 respectively. It is a political war between the educated Berbero-Arab, who says much and does little, and the French administrator, who says little and does much.

The vast majority of North African Arabs can neither read nor write these slogans. They are the peasant millions of the Atlas mountains and the plains, scratching the soil with prehistoric wooden ploughs, living in mud villages and saying their prayers and obeying their tribal chiefs. They think only of rainfall and the barley or date crop. The Arabs who write the slogans are the educated few: lawyers, journalists, students, clerks in and out of jobs, talking politics and reading newspapers in the cafés of Algiers, Fez and Tunis. They are the new, Europeanised bourgeoisie which, in North Africa today as in the Middle East yesterday, is the focus of Nationalism. This class, and the urban proletariat which listens to it, is still a small minority. But it is a minority which, sooner or later, will count. It is the ruling class of the future.

Before the last war the educated Arab was reasonably content to aspire to be a Frenchman, acquiescing in the French colonial policy of assimilation. But the war, with the promises of the Atlantic Charter, of President Roosevelt to the Sultan of Morocco, and finally of UNO, have carried his aspirations a stage farther. He now wants only to be an Arab. 'Assimilation' is no longer acceptable. Even 'association' is suspect. Nothing not independence will satisfy him. He disputes with the abstract dogmatism of a thirteenth-century theologian, admitting, for the most part, no compromise between black and white, wrong and right, slavery and freedom; contemptuous of the practical approach. Every people has a right to be free. Therefore set the Arabs free.

The Nationalist Party leaders are of two kinds. Typical of them are the Algerian rivals, Messali Hadji and Ferhat Abbas. Messali leads the People's Party of Algeria. He is an evangelist in a double-breasted suit, with a tarbush on his head, hair down to his shoulders and a long black beard. His rôle is that of the strict Moslem from the mediaeval Holy City of Tlemsen. But since his childhood he has been educated in France, acquiring French culture and a perfect command of the language. He sighs over France's ideals of liberty, fraternity and equality, which she practises at home but not in her colonies. He expounds carefully the distinction between Nationalism and Chauvinism, and declares himself only too ready

to respect French interests, provided that an independent Algerian Republic is immediately and unconditionally established. The voice with which he sways the masses is gentle and melodious, swelling in volume and rising in tone when it starts to talk of 'my poor oppressed people, suffering beneath the yoke of a harsh and Machiavellian imperialism.' Periodically his demagogy cools in prison or in exile, and at present he is under close surveillance, in a house safely outside the boundaries of Algiers. Asked what the Arabs will do with their freedom, once they have it, he replies vaguely: 'We shall, of course, have more industries, more agriculture, more exports, imports. That will be for the democratic assembly of the free Algerian people to decide.'

Dr. Ferhat Abbas is the leader of the Friends of the Manifesto of the Algerian People. He is a pharmacist from Sétif, who sways the bourgeoisie rather than the masses. He receives you informally in the domestic environment of his flat off the Rue Michelet, puts you into a leather armchair and gives you a glass of Cinzano. Dr. Abbas is an experienced politician who prides himself on his matter-of-fact outlook. If, he says, his fellow Arabs are still a subject people, it is partly their own fault. They have been content to live for too long in the Middle Ages. If you want to defeat your adversary, you must try to become like him, otherwise he will always remain your master. The Arabs must bring themselves up to date, learn science and so forth. This will take time. Algeria won't be ready for independence for perhaps another twenty years. She needs an interim period of apprenticeship, of co-operation on equal terms with the French. Everything could be solved if the French would only come to him and say: 'Let's work something out together.' In public, afraid to be dubbed a Francophil, he talks rather less reasonably.

While the Arab talks, the Frenchman acts. Alert, hard-working, inclined to be cynical, he is the realist, more concerned with the facts of administration than with the theories of nationalism. France, he says, has brought peace to all North Africa for the first time in its history. Until five years before the war, no man, Arab or foreigner, could move safely about Morocco. Now law and order reign. Roads and railways have opened up the country; cities have grown; mines and factories flourish; agriculture thrives. Thanks to the French, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia are now united modern territories, advancing along the road to prosperity. Left to themselves today, they would revert to anarchy. The Berbers would sweep down from the mountains again and massacre the Arabs, as they have done throughout history. The machine, which at present only the European can run, would break down. It has still a long road to cover. Meanwhile, security must at all costs be maintained. Hence an administration which is still partly military. Hence the cities of Fez and Meknes, kept within their mediaeval walls, commanded from a strategic distance by French military posts. Hence, perhaps, the new workers' city for a hundred thousand workers near Casablanca, kept similarly compact and isolated. Hence the martial figure of General Juin, Governor-General of Morocco, driving through the streets of Rabat with outriders, and an outsize French flag on the bonnet of his car.

Once order is assured, the main problems are social and economic. There are today twenty million Arabs in North Africa, and they are increasing at the rate of nearly half a million a year. In Algeria the native population has increased from a million-and-a-half to eight millions in a hundred years; in Morocco it has doubled itself in twenty. Famine and pestilence used to kill off a substantial percentage of Arabs every year. Now, thanks to French engineers and French doctors, they stay alive. And their standard of living goes up. More Arabs eating more is the basic French problem. North Africa used to export more than it imported. Now it imports more than it exports. To support its population, it must grow more food and make more goods. To do this, it must have more of what it most lacks—water.

So the French build barrages in the Atlas

mountains to supply electricity for industry and agriculture, and to irrigate new land in the plains. According to pre-war policy, this land would have been allotted to French colonists. Today new colonists are excluded, and the land is farmed by, and for, the Arabs, on a co-operative basis. Before, the Arab in these areas listlessly followed his few sheep and goats as they grazed on the thin desert scrub of the tribal lands. If God sent rain, he got his share of a barley crop. If not, he stayed hungry. Now every spring, regardless of rain, he watches his own land turning green with wheat and barley, beans and cotton; his own fruit-trees bursting into blossom and leaf, to provide him later with apricots and figs, olives and almonds. For the first time he finds money in his pocket, with which to buy more sugar to put in his tea, more clothes to go to town in, more bracelets for his wife, more wives even. A process is starting, by which the fatalistic nomad becomes the provident peasant.

Besides peasants, France has to create citizens. Of the twenty million Arabs, only a few hundred thousand have a modern education. Ten times as many have a mediaeval education. In Moslem schools and universities they learn the Koran, Moslem law, history and theology; little else, except in the eleventh-century University of Fez, where it is possible to study astrology. In the past the French did little to educate the North African Arab, partly because they did not want him to grow up too quickly, partly because he himself did not much want to go to school. Today every Arab wants education, and the French have embarked on big programmes, by which, in fifteen and twenty years respectively, the whole school-age population of Algeria and Tunisia will be at school, and an increasing élite will graduate either in North Africa or France. In Morocco the process will take longer, as the country, pacified only a few years before the war, is more backward.

This policy will have far-reaching political results. Today the main French argument against Arab self-government is that there are not enough educated Arabs to make it work. But in ten or fifteen years' time an Arab professional and administrative cadre will exist. And it will inevitably be a Nationalist cadre, with a growing literate population to influence. It may not by then be capable of governing North Africa. But it will consider itself capable, and will put strong pressure not only on France, but on international opinion, to achieve independence. What happens then will depend on what the French do in the meantime, politically and psychologically.

When nationalism flared up in North Africa after the War, the French put down disturbances in Algeria and Morocco with a decisive show of force, if not of violence. Then they went ahead with a series of political concessions. More Arabs were admitted to the French administration. In Tunisia, Arab Ministers, including a fully-fledged Prime Minister, were appointed, with French councillors under them; in Morocco, Arab Under-Secretaries, with French directors above them. Algeria and Morocco were given elected consultative assemblies, such as Tunisia had already.

The French colonials, adding up to ten per cent of the population in Algeria, six per cent in Tunisia, three per cent in Morocco, disliked these concessions. They are farmers, business men, professional men, who have made their homes and careers in North Africa and now see their interests threatened. They think the native should be put right back in his place and kept there. They refer sardonically to 'our so-called Moslem brothers'. They nicknamed Algeria's pro-Arab post-war Governor-General 'Mohammed' Chataigneau, and breathed sighs of relief when he was succeeded by a more bulldoggish Alsatian, Marcel Edmond Naegelen. Combining with reactionary elements in the administration itself, they hamper a liberal French policy.

The Nationalists disliked the concessions too. They did not go far enough. They were merely a smoke screen to placate world opinion. The administrations of North Africa remain overwhelmingly French. The Arab representatives, whether you call them

ministers or under-Secretaries, are without power, being in the hands of their French councillors or directors. The assemblies have no power either, being purely consultative, and in any case not representative. Real power over twenty million Arabs is still in the hands of a French Governor-General and his French executive. So say the Nationalists. It is the same old imperialist game of cat and mouse. It is contrary to the Atlantic Charter. It cannot go on.

But the mood of the Nationalists today is slightly chastened. America, forgetting the promises of President Roosevelt, has failed them. UNO, preoccupied with graver problems, has failed them. The Arab League, quarrelling over Palestine, has failed them too. In North Africa the heady Nationalist optimism of those early post-war days is cooling. The French talk, with satisfaction, of a period of calm. There have been good harvests at last, and that will go a long way to keep the people quiet and contented. Meanwhile, the business of development can be carried on without too much disturbance.

The longer stability continues, the better for North Africa. But this breathing-space will not last for ever. Most of the North African Arabs may not yet have reached the stage already reached by the Arabs of the Middle East, when they value the idea of liberty more than the fact of prosperity, when they would sooner govern themselves badly than be well governed by somebody else. But they will reach it sooner or later. If, in the meantime, France's political programme has kept pace with her social and economic programmes, if she has gained the confidence of the Arabs by allowing genuine democratic institutions to evolve, the transition towards independence may be gradual and painless, and French influence may persist in a bloc of free Western Arab states, as British influence persists among the free Arab states of the Middle East. If not, French control may indeed be prolonged, but the ultimate transition may be abrupt and bitter; French influence may be eliminated, as in Syria and the Lebanon, and Communism may profit from the resulting vacuum. At present it is under control. But the policy of the Communists, led mostly by Europeans, is to make common cause with the Nationalists against the French administration; and a frustrated, educated middle class, reacting on an increasing literate industrial proletariat, would present them with the classic revolutionary ingredients.

To guard against this, France may have to make up her mind to expedite Arab self-government, even if this involves giving independence to her colonies before they are entirely ripe for it; and she will have to convince the educated Arab that her intentions are honourable, and that her present government is devoted to his interests. Marshal Lyautey, the builder of Morocco, said that a people will accept colonisation only so long as the colonial power gives more than it takes. The French administration in North Africa is giving more than it is taking. But the Nationalists believe that it is taking more than it is giving. In a war of words, deeds are not enough. Psychology matters more. A spirit of fraternity and equality must pave the way for liberty. The heavy father must become the understanding elder brother. France needs a new colonial ideal, and perhaps a new Lyautey, to inspire the Arabs with it. The moment is propitious. The flesh is willing. But the spirit is weak.

The Magic of North Africa

'Here there is no sense of space or time. Here magic carpets are woven, love philtres are brewed, magicians and sorcerers stalk through narrow winding streets by daylight to disappear suddenly as though by enchantment into the recesses of those white walls. No one can spend a night during Ramadan under the moonlit Ramparts of Fez .... and still remain entirely European.' *Nina Epton in* Journey Under the Crescent Moon

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Memories of FEODOR CHALIAPIN

EUGENE K. ILYIN

WHEN, in August 1918, I suddenly decided to leave Moscow with a troupe of actors, there was no time to say goodbye to my friends. I was glad, therefore, to see, as the *droshky* passed the Zone Theatre, erect by the tram-stop, the majestic silhouette of Chaliapin. My first impulse was to halt the *droshky* and say goodbye to him, but I did not follow the impulse, for I knew him well enough to realise that the way to remain a friend of Chaliapin was to avoid any demonstrations of friendship, particularly in public. But Chaliapin recognised me and hailed me with his brandished stick.

'Hey!' he shouted, 'What's the matter? Is that young blood of yours driving you so hard that you can't stop to say good-morning?'

'There's no time,' I said as the driver slowed down, 'It's goodbye, I'm leaving.'

'Is that so?' he said, 'Well, the world is wide enough to move about in,' and, striking an exaggerated attitude, he quoted from Lermontov:

> And he, the rebel, seeks the storm
> As though in storm his peace were found.

It was a typical encounter with Chaliapin. Two or three times I turned back to see that famous figure with its enormous stature and flashing golden hair. He stood and made weaving motions in the air with his stick as if it were a baton and he were conducting an unseen orchestra in a work of his own creation.

Nine years later, in the Ring in Vienna, I saw the same magnificent figure, the morning sunshine glittering in his hair, the waving stick in his hand, walking towards me. We met in front of the window of a big carpet store. He was looking covetously at the specimens displayed in the window. He loved beautiful carpets and stared at them, oblivious to anything around him.

'Carpets, ah! carpets,' he said in his deep reverberating voice, 'Lovely things'.

'Yes, they are grand,' I said quietly, 'and it is grand to see you too.'

'Lord have mercy on us!' he exclaimed: 'What is this? A resurrection from the dead? . . . Anyhow, it is a grand opportunity for a drink.'

'But Feodor Ivanovich, it is too early,' I said, 'It is only half past ten.'

'I didn't mean vodka,' he answered, 'one can drink coffee too—if one must. To me it is the most disgusting medicine, but my wife will be grateful to you for encouraging me in good habits. Where can we get some?'

Yes, it was the same Chaliapin, though he had aged considerably in the nine years. He seemed nervous, too, and I could imagine why. This great singer and actor, in spite of having played the rôles a hundred times, would quiver with apprehension before a performance. I had often seen him in that state years before as he waited for the rise of the curtain at the Zemin Opera or the Bolshoi Theatre.

'You aren't nervous?' I asked him.

'Nervous? I? No, of course not! But I am afraid—oh, how I am afraid!'

'Then you will cross yourself a dozen times behind the curtain, as usual, and when it rises, all will be well.'

'Don't jest about sacred things,' he reproved me, 'it really helps.'

'It helps because you are Chaliapin and have a great voice,' I answered; 'others would not find it of much use.'

The next day he sang in Faust. He was accustomed to train his conductors and their orchestras to his own needs and to give them his customary tempo. It was not always easy, and led to trouble. This time, with the great Alvin conducting, Chaliapin stopped after the first few bars of Mephistos' Aria and raised his hand.

'Please, maestro,' he said, 'take it just a little more quickly.'

This was, naturally, a sensation, but Alvin complied, and the performance was continued to a triumphant finish. In any other place this action would have been made a cause of scandal and resentment, but those great connoisseurs of music, the Viennese, understood and appreciated his desire for perfection.

Next morning, over our coffee, I tried to avoid the subject but Chaliapin referred to it.

'I can see you are annoyed with me over what happened last night. This beastly Chaliapin and his mad antics which he calls love of art.'

'Have you read the papers'? I interrupted.

'I can't read German: I hate the language.'

I read him excerpts from the reviews. He was surprised that he had not been 'boxed' for his action. He smiled and said:

'I am not happy with conductors. I have met only one who understood me and saw what I was driving at.'

'And who was this happy man?' I asked.

'You don't know him', he answered—'an Englishman named Thomas Beecham.'

'An Englishman?'

'Yes—and what a man! You see, my friend, there are two kinds of conductors: mere conductors, and artists. Beecham is an artist. He is *possessed* by music; he is a great lover and enthusiast of music. When he conducts, he is not doing a job; he is expressing a passion, a religion. Of course, he is like me and you and all true executive artists; he is crazy. Is it not crazy to be obsessed by beauty? What is it—what use is it? . . . Beauty! . . . You see, when I first met Beecham in London, I was nervous. I expected a dilettante, the son of a rich man, who could afford to play with an orchestra. But later, when we came together in the work of creation, I got to know him. You know what it is like to work with me—you saw the rehearsals of *Don Quixote*. Beecham gave all his time, day and night, to work with me. He, too, is a perfectionist and he worked till he brought me and that great strange crowd of singers and players into that perfect communion that is necessary for a true performance of an opera. In a little while I did not need to intervene; he saw what I wanted, and gave it to me. It was the first time that I had met a conductor who was willing to put aside his prejudices and his dignity for the sake of a perfect performance. Often, of course, we lost our tempers, but we forgot all about it in the joy of achieving what we set out to do . . . You know,' continued Chaliapin, with that grandeur of expression which his face assumed when he spoke of artistic satisfaction, 'you know, I don't like to use the word "creator" in connection with a mere performer. I believe there is only one "Creator". But if ever I could use that word, I would use it of Thomas Beecham, and I hope that England and the world of music may enjoy him for many years.'

Ten years later, I again met Chaliapin in Vienna. When I looked at the worn majesty of his face, I was reminded of that unforgettable scene where the dying Don Quixote says goodbye to his Dulcinea. Chaliapin's Dulcinea was music, stage lights, applause and the holy fear of imperfection. When we said goodbye, he asked me where I was going.

'To England,' I answered.

His face lit up.

'England! Ah, when you arrive in England, greet Beecham for me.'

But when I reached England, Chaliapin was no more, and I did not wish to take greetings from a dead man.

WILLIAM SAROYAN

The Theological Student

I BEGAN to meet the theological student about a quarter of a century ago in the plays of certain Russian writers. Tolstoy, Dostoievsky, Chekhov, Andreyev, and Gorki seldom wrote a play in which the theological student did not appear. The theological student seemed to be the playwright himself looking back at his youth with an amused but admiring eye. He was certainly a good man to have around—young; nervous; pale; often pimply; not the least bit handsome; ridiculous and pathetic; ill-clothed; ill-fed; eager for tea; full of the lore of heaven, hell and earth; and yet for all that a man who could be counted on to liven matters up considerably, for he was a devil at heart.

He was certainly always in the midst of a desperate struggle with sin, which appeared to be an overwhelming longing to kiss the girls, a longing that never failed to startle him and bewilder them. Some of the girls were women with children older than himself. These rather liked him, for he was clumsy, inexperienced, inept, and therefore amusing to them. More in charity than in passion they permitted him to breathe heavily in their arms, only to discover later in the afternoon that he was thinking of killing himself. His habit of coughing nervously in their faces made them cry out, 'Oh, Alexander Alexandrovich!'—which he took for an expression of love. He disgraced himself in company by his ill-timed remarks and by his uncontrollable desire to escape being good.

He was useful to each playwright, however, in that it seemed perfectly natural for him to explain why humanity was unhappy.

In the plays of Tolstoy the theological student blamed man's unhappiness on women, and sometimes went so far as to mention certain physical parts of them to which men were so powerfully attracted that they could not give their undivided attention to God or farming; and then, in another play, Tolstoy would have the theological student blaming something else.

Once, I believe, it was the railroads, tempting men to run away. (From women of course, although the playwright mentioned only crying children and members of the local government who were for ever greeting people in a most insincere manner.)

Another time the theological student, having had no stronger stimulant than a cup of tea, shouted that man is a beast because of his stomach; and went on to ask if anyone had recently noticed how frequently men sit down to eat, how much precious time is wasted in eating or in planning to do so, and what mischief attends the circumstance of a stomach full of meat, wheat, greens, cheese, wine, and water.

Dostoievsky's theological student claimed that man was unhappy because his very birth had been a nervous disorder.

Gorki's theological student was the best of the lot, though, for he hated everything which made life miserable, and everything made life miserable. The theological student proceeded quite logically to find fault with God, whereupon another side of Gorki, embodied in another character in the play—a notorious waster of sixty who had recently read a book from cover to cover—came forward with an attack on the government, blaming it for his present age and ill-health, and remarking profoundly that he had once

been thirty—no, even less than that—twenty! But now what? A ridiculous thing in a ridiculous black cloak! (Looking meaningful across the room at Tatanian Lvovna, aged eighteen, and detecting in her the faintest trace of admiration.)

Having met the theological student and having found him an odd sort of fish—in no particular greatly different from anyone else I had met in the Russian plays—I began to wonder what it was that he was supposed to be studying. Whatever it was, did he study full-time or part-time? Did he study at school or at home? Or was he called a theological student simply because he was young? None of the playwrights was very clear about any of this, other than to hint that what the theological student *wanted* was perfection.

At length I decided for myself that he studied theology books, and I decided to study them also.

A WHOLE small mezzanine balcony with a floor of thick glass was devoted to books of theology at the Public Library in Fresno. Climbing the steep narrow stairway to this section of the library was like climbing upward on a small cramped ship. Once there, the feeling of sailing was very great, and the faces of the other readers seemed flushed by a mild fever, as if they were all a little seasick and were trying their best not to throw up. They were certainly dizzy from the height, the hot air, and the narrowness of the aisles between the shelves of books. I joined them and began to examine every book on the theology shelves.

Every book seemed depressing, but I was fearful of putting one of them back in its place until I was reasonably sure it was absurd and did not have hidden away in it somewhere what I was looking for.

What *was* I looking for? It did not occur to me at the time—nothing much occurs to anybody at the time, and we might just as well come right out and admit it—but whether I knew it in so many words or not, I was very definitely looking for a theology which I myself might have written, or might one day write. That is to say, I was looking for what I believed was the only true theology. Robert Burns had already summed it up with Scotch economy, but one frequently forgets the remarks of poets. 'A man's a man for a' that' was right enough, and the implication of laughing about it was in the remark, but I imagined there would be a fuller recitation on the theme.

There wasn't, however.

The millions of words in the hundreds of books were little more than nonsense. Even so, I took home with me after each visit two or three of the theology books which I felt might not prove to be altogether senseless, and read around in them until I was convinced that the author was as ridiculous as any theological student in any Russian play.

No writer is more pathetic than the one whose passion is to complicate, and theology appeared to be a matter of complicating. If it was a matter of believing, why not believe and be done with it? Swedenborg sweated like a horse and wrote a couple of million words that must have had the effect of making it impossible for any reader ever again to smile, itself a kind of theological act, although uncomplicated and surely no more meaningless than Swedenborg's two million words.

All of which brings me to the plot of this story.

One evening, on my way home from the public library, I was met in the Santa Fé freight yards by a man who was profoundly complicated and desperately theological.

'Do you know,' he called out from a distance of twenty yards, 'that the world is going to end tonight?'

'What time?' I called back.

'Don't know the exact hour,' the man said, 'but it will be some time tonight.'

From his shoulders the man brushed dirt which had got there when he had leapt from a freight train and fallen.

'Did you just get to town?' I said.

'Yes, but I was born here twenty-seven years ago,' the man said.

'Are you ready for the end of the world?' he went on, as he took to brushing dust from his pants.

'As ready as I am for anything else,' I said. 'Are *you* ready?'

'That's the trouble,' the man said. 'I'm not. I'm not at all.'

Suddenly, the man fell down.

'Do you know where the Emergency Hospital is?' I said. 'It's at the back of the Police Station on Broadway, across from the Public Library, but if you don't want to go there, you can go to the County Hospital. It's across Ventura Boulevard at the Fair Grounds, but I suppose you know where these places are. I live on the way to the County Hospital and I'll go with you as far as my house. Maybe you can pick up a ride.'

The man leaned on me and we stumbled in silence past Inderrieden's Dried Fruit Packing House. Crossing Ventura, he fell again, and an automobile stopped. The driver of the automobile got out and came to the man and said, 'What's the matter?'

'He ought to get to a doctor,' I said. 'He's hurt.'

The driver of the automobile helped me get the man into the car. On the way to the County Hospital, the injured man took one of the three books I had borrowed from the Public Library and opened it.

'*Either-Or*,' he read. 'By Søren Kierkegaard. Who's he?'

'I don't know,' I said.

'A man ought to know who these people are,' the man said.

He began to read the book. When we reached the hospital, his grip was so tight on the book that I felt sure it would be damaged and the girl at the desk in the Public Library would examine the damage, and then me, and wonder how it had happened, but not say anything.

The driver of the car—a man who had remarked on the way to the hospital that his name was August Bockbell, a name I have never forgotten, perhaps because the driver—sensing that the other man was dying—gave an account of his *own* life, which included almost killing his elder brother over the ownership of a pocket-knife—helped the injured man into the reception room, and then went off, apologising that it was necessary for him to do so.

I did not go with him because the injured man was still reading the book I had borrowed from the Public Library, and it seemed to me that it would have been rude under the circumstances to ask him to return it. He was reading the book with incredible swiftness. When it was necessary for the injured man to go off with a nurse and a young man in a white coat who did not seem to be much of a doctor, I followed them down a hall to swinging doors, partly from anxiety about the man himself and partly from anxiety about the library book. At the swinging doors the nurse told me to return to the reception room. I wanted to ask her to please get my book for me, but instead I said, 'He's going to be all right, isn't he?' The nurse gestured severely, as if to say, 'No difficult questions at this difficult time please.'

I returned to the reception room and sat down.

When I examined the two remaining library books, I discovered that my library card with my name and address on it was in the book by Kierkegaard which the injured man had taken. My library card was as important to me as a passport is to a traveller. I had thought of waiting only ten or fifteen minutes for the book, but when I discovered that my library card was in it, I decided to wait two hours if necessary.

It was necessary to wait longer than that, however, during which time I grew very hungry—half-sick from it, in fact—and very angry, too. At first I was angry at the nurse who entered the reception room every ten or fifteen minutes in a state of confusion and excitement and refused to listen to what I had to tell her or to tell me about the condition of the injured man. After a while I became angry about the man himself, whether he was to live or die—for he had most rudely taken off with a book I was charged on my honour to return to the Public Library in the same condition in which I had found it. Finally, I became angry about Kierkegaard, a man concerning whom I knew aboslutely nothing except that he

had written a book with the strange title of *Either-Or*.

After having waited more than three hours for the return of my book, the nurse came up to me in the reception room in a manner which revealed unmistakably that she meant to speak, and began by announcing a hopelessly garbled version of *my* name.

'Yes?' I said.

'He's dead,' she went on. 'Dr. Humpkit (at least that's what I *thought* she said) did everything possible for him, but it was just no use.'

'I'm sorry. The thing I wanted to tell you was to please let me have my book.'

'What book?'

'The book by Kierkegaard.'

'He said it was *his* book. *His* library card with his *name* and *address* on it is in the book, at any rate.'

'The card in the book is *my* card,' I said. 'Why do you get everything wrong? I was walking home from the Public Library with three books when I met the man in the Santa Fé freight yards. He had just jumped off a train and had hurt himself, so I helped him to Ventura Avenue where he fell down, and a motorist stopped and brought him here. In the automobile he took one of the three books I had borrowed from the Public Library and kept it. Now he's dead, and just because my library card happened to be in the book, you've given *him* my name. Well, I'm sorry he's dead, whoever he is, but I'd like to have my book back anyway.'

'He himself told us his name,' the nurse said. 'I am entering it in the hospital records. We shall return the book to the Public Library for him.'

'You've been to school,' I said, because I was so angry and hungry, and then left the hospital and began walking home.

WHEN I got there, I found the street full of automobiles. The house was full of uncles and aunts and cousins from all over the city.

My uncle Khosrove was the first to see me, for he was sitting alone on the steps of the back porch smoking a cigarette.

He got up and shouted at the top of his voice into the house, 'I told you it was a mistake. Here he is now, the same as ever, but very much in need of food.'

Everybody inside the house came tumbling out, and then, after having seen me, they all hurried back in to set the table.

After I had had all the food I could get into my belly, my mother asked very sweetly, 'Why did they come in an ambulance and say that you had died?'

'If I had known they were going to come in an ambulance,' I said, 'I would have come with them instead of walking three miles on an empty stomach at ten o'clock at night. They didn't tell me they were going to come in an ambulance.'

'We've been terribly worried about you,' my uncle Zorab said.

This was too much for my uncle Khosrove.

'We've been terribly worried about you!' he mocked. 'When the man from the County Hospital told us you were dead, it worried us terribly, for fear you would not recover.'

He turned to my uncle Zorab.

'Why do you talk nonsense?' he said. 'Is it possible to worry about someone who is dead?'

My uncle Zorab cleared his throat nervously as he said, 'Well, all I can say is, we worried , and here he is alive!'

'Man,' my uncle Khosrove shouted, 'will you never understand the very simplest sort of thing? He never died. He never came anywhere near dying. There has been a mistake, as I said. Your worrying did not bring a dead man back to life. The boy's been involved in some sort of typical American complication. Unless you understand this now, there is no telling what terrible distortions will come into the telling of this family episode in years to come. Now that the boy has had his supper, let him tell us the whole story, and then one by one let us return to our own homes and our own lives. Whoever it was that died, we shall all join him soon enough, and it is quite all right.' He turned to me. 'Now tell us what it was that happened which the people of the hospital reported to us as having been your

death at the age of twenty-seven. I tried to tell these people that it was not you who had died, for you are not twenty-seven years old, but they replied that perhaps you had given twenty-seven as your age in a last attempt to be impressive. How old are you, and then tell us the story.'

'I'm fourteen,' I said.

And then I told the whole story, accurately, point by point.

My aunt Khatoon took to weeping softly for the young man who had died, claiming that he had died for *me*, so that I might go on living, a theory which made my mother angry; but my grandfather twisted his moustaches and said, 'All very well and good, but who the devil is this man Kierkegaard to make such an ungodly fuss in this desolate and far-away village which is trying to pass for a city?'

'He is the man who wrote one of the three books I borrowed from the public Library this afternoon,' I said, 'but that's all I know about him.'

'Well,' my grandfather said, 'that's fine. Now, all of you—get out of here. Go home where you belong. If it's for him you've been crying, there he is trying to get meat from between his teeth, so go home.'

EVERYBODY embraced lightly by way of celebrating my survival; there was kindly whispering among the women; the small boys took to wrestling in the living-room; and then at last everybody was gone excepting the Old Man and my uncle Khosrove. These two exchanged quarrelsome glances and then my uncle Khosrove said, 'I know what you are going to ask him. Well, I'll give you the answer, to save him the trouble. You are going to ask him what he means by getting into complications of all sorts every other Friday, and I will answer for him that he doesn't mean anything at all by it. Some people come into this world asleep and go out of it asleep, and that is very thoughtful of them. A few others—like myself and this boy, my nephew Aram Garoghlanian—come into this world asleep, and then one fair Friday wake up and look around and see ourselves as we are.'

'What are we?' the Old Man asked politely.

'Armenians,' my uncle Khosrove said quickly. 'Could anything be more ridiculous? The Englishman has an empire to govern. The Frenchman has art to guide and measure. The German has an army to train and test. The Russian has a revolution to start. The Swiss have hotels to manage, the Mexicans mandolins to play, the Spaniards bulls to fight, the Austrians waltzes to dance to, and so on and so forth, but what have *we*?'

'Loud mouths to shut up?' the Old Man suggested.

'And the Irish,' my uncle Khosrove went on. 'The Irish have a whole island in which to be poverty-stricken; the Arabs a thousand tribes to bring together in the desert; the Jews child prodigies to send on concert tours; the Gypsies wagons and fortune-telling cards; the Americans chronic nervousness which they call freedom, but what have the Armenians?'

'Since you insist, tell me,' said the Old Man. 'What have the Armenians?'

'Manners,' my uncle Khosrove said.

'Are you mad?' the Old Man said. 'Nothing is so unnatural as a polite Armenian.'

'I did not say *good* manners,' my uncle Khosrove said. 'I said manners. The good or bad of it I leave to others. Manners is what we have, and very little of anything else. You are going to ask this boy what he means by getting into complications of all sorts every other Friday. Your asking is manners. Well, go ahead and ask him. I'm going to the Arax Coffee House for a couple of hours of tavli. My going is more manners'.

'Before you go,' the Old Man said, 'I think you ought to know I wished to ask the boy to report to me about the book by Kierkegaard, if he ever reads it. Now, I will go to the Coffee House *with* you.'

The Old Man got up and yawned enormously. He yawned in three movements, after the fashion of symphonies, very

slowly, wildly, and finally slowly and wildly by turns.

He went out of the house by the front door while my uncle Khosrove took the back. The screen doors slammed one-two, and I went looking for half a watermelon to eat, for I was very thirsty.

The following day I went out to the County Hospital and after a great deal of effort identified myself, retrieved my book, and brought it back to read. The injured man had reached page ninety-nine, for he had folded the edge of the page over, so that he might easily find his place when next he took it up. After reading an hour and three-quarters, I too reached page ninety-nine, and decided that I did not wish to read any farther. I took the book back to the Public Library and, as I had expected, the girl at the desk noticed the damage, examined it, examined me as I whistled softly, but did not say anything. I climbed the steep stairway to the mezzanine and continued my search for the book of theology that I hoped to find.

THAT evening I reported to my grandfather that Kierkegaard appeared to have been a Dane who had been born in 1813 and had died in 1855, after having spent the greater part of his time struggling with the devil, the church, and the complications of theology.

'Died at the age of forty-two,' the Old Man said. 'Struggling with the devil is most destructive, I see, but perhaps had he *not* struggled, he would have lived only twenty-two years and left behind him not even the book he wrote. Have you read the book?'

'He wrote more than one book,' I said. 'I read the first ninety-nine pages of one of them, and then I got tired of it.'

'What did he say in the first ninety-nine pages?'

'I'm not sure, but he *seemed* to say that everything is not enough.'

'That is how it is with these fellows who are for ever struggling with the devil,' the Old Man said. 'And the unfortunate man you met yesterday in the Santa Fé freight yards, what about him?'

'He died. Yesterday was the end of the world for him all right, just as he said.'

'His real name?'

'Well,' I said, 'I have a name written down here from the book at the County Hospital which is *supposed* to be his name, but I am sure it is only another mistake. It's no mistake that he's dead, though. I suppose he might have lived had he not fallen into the hands of people so sure of themselves, and so quick to get things accurately wrong. I'm sure he didn't expect to die, for he turned down a page of the book, so that he might go on reading it. Here's the name I got from the Hospital book. Abo Mogabgab.'

'How can that be?' the Old Man said. 'Abo Mogabgab is the name of the man from whom I buy my clothing, the Syrian with the shop on Mariposa Street, a man older than myself. Here, look into the lining of this coat at the label and read to me what is said there'.

I looked at the label inside the coat and read aloud, 'Abo Mogabgab'.

'A magnificent example of American efficiency and theological accuracy,' the Old Man said. 'A man has been killed and a coat label has been given the burial service. And yet, here we are, all of us who are *still* alive, none the worse for the terrible efficiency or the fierce accuracy. Thank you for reporting to me on the gospel of Kierkegaard. I am still eager to learn, but I find that the farmer's gospel is still the best we have. Now, the vine is planted thus; and thus it is tended; and thus protected from rabbits; and thus are the grapes harvested; and thus are they made into wine; and thus dried by the sun into raisins; and in the winter thus it is that the branches of the vines are pruned; and in the spring thus it is that the vines are watered. What other gospel is half so pleasant, since it is all out in the weather? To hell with these stifling chambers in which poor men sit and confuse themselves. When they are all through for the day, don't they get up and go home and eat a bowl of stewed raisins with a piece of black

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ANDRÉ MALRAUX

THE POET OF VIOLENT DEFEAT

by D. S. SAVAGE

In every period there are a few men who speak to their contemporaries with unique relevance, not so much through their possession of an unassailable truth as through their closeness to the suffering, the perplexity and the hope of their time. Of such is André Malraux, whose most characteristic work is characteristically entitled *La Condition Humaine*. As a writer, and a thoroughly representative modern intelligence, Malraux has pressed with exemplary courage towards an immediate confrontation of existence: the novelist in him has always been subordinated to the impassioned questioner of fate. There is no more *forceful* living writer than Malraux: yet, for all its assurance and power, his work is by no means free of a pervasive ambiguity. Malraux seems possessed by a duality which causes him to appear as a veritable Janus among contemporary novelists: an enigma in whom the writer on the one part is consciously counterposed by the professional man of action; on the other, the mystical individualist by the collectivist politician, the fatalist by the devotee of freedom; and his history may be interpreted as a prolonged and intense struggle to come to terms with these opposed components of his being.

Of all his novelist precursors, Malraux stands closest, I think, to the Dostoievsky of *Crime and Punishment* and of *The Possessed*—the creator of Raskolnikov and Stavrogin—than to any other. But it is the poet Rimbaud to whom he is spiritually most akin—Rimbaud, who, with a single-minded intensity which Malraux however lacks, with one movement abandoned an exclusive, introverted preoccupation with poetry for the desperate career of trader and gun-runner in equatorial Africa, leaving as testament his cryptic prose-poem, *A Season in Hell*. It is just such an abrupt transition which marks Malraux as a writer and as a man of action. In one sense, no one has brought literature and life closer together than Malraux who, whether as explorer-archaeologist in the Siamese jungle or Commander of the Loyalist Air Force in the Spain of the Civil War, has first enacted a rôle and then written it. And yet this deliberate association of literature and life is expressive not only of a resolute will to overcome their prior disparity: it is also a tacit admission of it. The resulting movement is not, after all, so much an achieved unity as an alternation of two antithetical positions.

To understand the import of this, one must grasp the peculiarly restricted sense in which Malraux understands 'life'. To live humanly is not to *be* but to *act*; and to act is to act exclusively, intensely, violently. His enigmatic duality arises out of his commitment to the *mystique* of action, coupled, as it is, with a perceptible, if understandable, reluctance to accept fully the consequences of his position—consequences which are set forth in all three of his earlier novels, but most simply and plainly in *The Royal Way*.

'There's a streak of mysticism in every adventurer,' one of the characters in the story remarks of Perken, the central figure.

And Perken's starting-point is precisely the nullity of all things human. '. . . You know as well as I do,' he says to Claude, his younger companion, 'that life is meaningless: when a man lives alone, he can't help brooding over the problem of his destiny. And death is always there, you see, ahead of him, like . . . like a standing proof of the futility of life . . . To be killed—that's of no importance. But death, death is different; it's the exact opposite, in fact . . . What weighs on me is—how shall I put it? my human lot, my limitations; that I must grow old, and time, that loathsome thing, spread through me like a cancer, inevitably. Time—there you have it! D'you see all those damn-fool insects making for our lamp, obeying the call of the light? The termites, too, obey the law of the ant-hill. I . . . *I will not obey.*' The limitations against which Perken revolts are the whole context of nature and society in which he is implicated —if you wish, the entire structure of the objective world, against whose tyranny his subjectivity rises in proud and defiant repudiation. Action thus becomes for him a means to a form of mystical *askesis*, a subjective asseveration of infinite freedom in which the spirit declares and establishes its transcendence through its unshakable will to endure to the limit the agony of the tortured and sacrificed body. Walking unarmed towards the hostile jungle tribesmen at the risk of terrible mutilation—'. . . such was his wild elation at the thought that he was risking more than death, so vividly did he see it as his revenge upon the universe, his warrant of release from man's estate, that he was conscious of an inward struggle, an effort to fight down an overpowering hallucination, a kind of ecstasy.' With true insight, Malraux extends this will to *askesis* to the facts of sexuality.

'. . . I don't give a damn if all my ideas are so much hogwash, so long as there are women . . . It's hard to realize all the loathing of the world that lies behind that thought: "One woman more". Each body that one hasn't yet possessed is—an enemy . . . There's nothing in the world to match it—sensual pleasure strained to the point when it becomes intolerable, the breaking-point of pain! No, for me these women aren't merely bodies: they're . . . instruments. And I want . . .' Claude guessed his unseen gesture, the gesture of a hand crushing out life. '. . . as I once wanted to conquer men.'

'What he's really after,' Claude mused, 'is self-annihilation.'

And, indeed, the narrative ends in the only possible way, with the slow, agonised death of Perken, very much in the manner of the actual death of Rimbaud, from a poisoned leg.

Action here finds its consummation in the actor's absolute possession of his own nothingness in the world-transcending moment of death: through pain, destruction and loss, death is the goal towards which it ineluctably moves. 'Once a man decides to cut himself off completely—*completely*, mind you—from his fellow-men, he's always bound to inflict terrible sufferings on himself, simply to prove his strength.' '. . . Whence, indeed, if not from death, came his fierce desire, heavy with odours of death-ridden flesh, for all that is immortal?' . . . 'Suddenly Claude realised what the link between them was. . . their common obsession with death.' However exalted their ostensible motives, Malraux's characters seem to be unable to perform even a simple, positive creative act. They organise, plan, waste, suffer, kill and destroy; but they cannot love, build, beget or preserve. In a profound sense, they are impotent, and their limitless urge to power a symptom of a fundamental powerlessness of which their destructiveness is an expression. 'When I see people looking as if they loved each other, I feel as if I'd like to smash their faces in,' says the downtrodden Hemmelrich in *Man's Estate*, (the English title of *La Condition Humaine*) whose deepest wish it is—'To requite by no matter what violence, to avenge with bombs the unspeakable horror of the existence which had poisoned him since the day of his birth, and which would poison his children in the same way.' Both in *The Conquerors* and *Man's Estate* the

terrorist—the rapt, devoted killer—is a dominant figure.

All the early novels reach their climax with scenes of death or carnage, the exalted mysticism of death being perhaps most frankly expressed through Kyo, in *Man's Estate*. 'He understood now that to be willing to lead the woman he loved to her death was perhaps love in its most complete form, the love beyond which nothing can go.' And Kyo himself dies—'. . . so as to give significance to his own life.'

In each of these novels, then, Malraux reaches an uncompromisingly nihilistic position from which death is seen as the meaning of life, and action and suffering the *askesis* through which life is prepared for its tragic consummation. But the very fact that he should have found time to write three novels on this theme is a demonstration of his qualitative difference from Rimbaud, and a measure of his involuntary attachment to life and hope. And here we are inevitably brought up against the part played in his work by the apparently self-contradictory acceptance of Communist politics. Perhaps Malraux's position can be most suggestively indicated by reference to the least political of his books. 'Men of my sort should always have the forces of a State to play with,' Perken asserts in *The Royal Way*: and he also says—'. . . Just to be a king means nothing; it's the building up of a kingdom that's worth while.' Communism, it would seem, provides the excuse and the opportunity for action, and it does so through its erection of an ultimate purpose which the action is meant to forward. But there is a patent contradiction here, for to utilise an ultimate purpose as an *excuse* for action is to reverse the rightful position of the two factors of the equation and to make of action the real end, which the purpose, in the last analysis, merely serves. In *The Conquerors* Malraux indicates this dilemma by opposing to Garine, the 'conquering' type of individualist revolutionary, the 'Roman' figure of the organiser, Borodin. As the police chief, Nicolaieff, says of Garine: 'He is not a Communist. That is it. Of course, it does not matter to me: but all the same Borodin is logical: Communism has no room for those who want to be themselves first, and to lead an independent life.'

The contradiction is furthered by this use of a basically optimistic and non-tragic social creed to provide the machinery for an essentially pessimistic and tragic view of life. In the earlier works this matters little because, except as an excuse for action, Communism is hardly taken seriously, and a mood of tragic pessimism prevails unchecked. Its weakness is not manifested until, by his unavowed but patent reluctance to abide by his own deeper vision, Malraux is obliged to move explicitly towards the superficial social 'hope' of Communism and thus to pull up tragedy by the roots. The results of this movement are to be seen in the subsequent and much inferior works, *Days of Contempt* and *Days of Hope*, both written during the era, and in the mood, of the Popular Front.

MALRAUX'S uneasy movement in the direction of the collective optimism of Communism may well have been provoked by the distorted reflection of his position then confronting him in the insurgent Nazi movement. *Days of Contempt* carries a preface repudiating individualism and proclaiming sociality. But it is an impersonal sociality—a *collectivity*. An impersonal fraternity, inspired by 'a vague and boundless hope', is celebrated in the panoramic and generalised pages of *Days of Hope*. The trouble is that this emotion is inadequate to the metaphysical despair which it has to counterpoise, and there is an unhappy suggestion of the utilisation of the social creed as an excuse for participation in a glorious war. The death that rules still is devoid of tragedy, for the individual fate is submerged in the general destruction; and where, hitherto, Malraux had not failed to bring out unmistakably the connection between the orientation towards violent death and a perverted sexuality, he now avoids the issue and shows his assorted soldiery as strangely sexless figures.

Days of Hope was published twelve years ago, and much has happened between then and now, including Malraux's apostasy from Communism and the Swiss publication of the first part of a new novel, *The Struggle with the Angel*, which promises, from the fragments available in translation, to be a work of the highest order. The significance of the very remarkable essay on T. E. Lawrence (which is concluded in this issue of *World Review*) lies not merely in its sufficient demonstration of Malraux's undiminished powers of imaginative interpretation and compelling utterance, but in his renewed engagement with his original theme. The wheel has come full circle, and once again he wrestles with the ultimate questions raised by a Rimbaud, a Garine. The qualities to which he points in Lawrence—his pride, his implacable will, his utter absence of faith, his desire to gauge the measure of his own strength, his disgust and need of self-degradation—all, significantly, are the distinguishing marks of Dostoievsky's Stavrogin, that prophetic prefiguration of a certain daemonic type of modern man. He rightly calls Lawrence—'. . . one of the most religious minds of his time, if one understands by religion to feel to the depths of one's soul the anguish of being a man. . .' There is deep understanding of the man—understanding from within—in his words: 'He had always been profoundly at odds with himself . . . And this dislocation was not one of the least elements of his strength when *it flung him* into action.' (Italics mine.) Truly, it was nothing other than this dislocation which flung him towards action, towards *askesis*, towards death: the dislocation which is expressed in his cry: 'Somewhere there must be an Absolute; that is the only thing that counts: and I can't succeed in finding it. Hence his impression of existence without an object.' We are reminded of Gisor's words to the pride-stung Ferrall in *Man's Estate*: 'The might of kings consists in governing, doesn't it? But man has no desire to govern: his wish, as you said yourself, is to shackle, to constrain. . . He wants, in a world of men, to be more than a man. As I say, to escape mortal's lot. To be not powerful, but all-powerful—that's his yearning. All this illusory sickness of the brain whose intellectual manifestation is the will to power, is a thirst for divinity. Every man dreams of being God. . .'

The dislocation in Lawrence, in Rimbaud, in Perken, in Stavrogin is that between boundless, transcendent spirit and immanent, bounded nature; between an infinite, unconditional subjectivity and the finite, conditional structures of the objective world, in which men are seen as trees walking. If the absolute metaphysical despair which arises from, and in turn perpetuates, this dislocation is to be countered and overcome, it can only be by a hope which is at least as deeply grounded, as thorough-going, as ultimate as it. 'According to Lawrence's conception a great personality is a saint or a prophet—minus God.' Yet, minus God, there is no such great personality: there is only a Stavrogin or, at most, the projected figure of a posturing Zarathustra and behind that a dizzy and insane Nietzsche. It is well for Malraux to write—'The Absolute is the supreme Court of Appeal for the tragic man, the only efficacious one, because it alone can burn—even though the whole man burns with it—the most profound feeling of dependence—the remorse of being oneself.' But the Absolute deprived of, and opposed to, the Relative means not a healing of the dislocation which afflicts the daemonic man, but its utmost extension: it becomes a devouring flame in which all that is necessary and finite is consumed indeed—to ash.

It is the loftiest spirits who are most prone to spiritual pride. What Lawrence, what Rimbaud in their exaltation could not bend themselves to accept and believe is that the Relative is not a stain on the purity of the Absolute, but—however alienated and disgraced—its finite manifestation. According to where one stands, it is the Whore awaiting the Slayer with his avenging sword, or the Bride awaiting the consummation of a Marriage in which action and passion shall be as one, and necessity transformed and translucent in freedom.

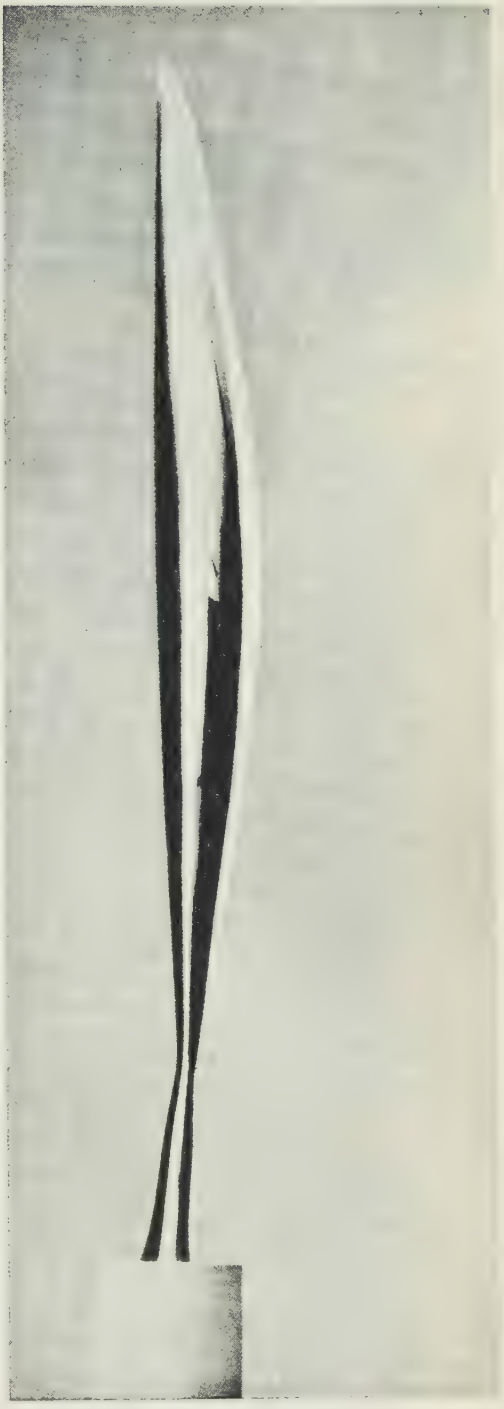
CONSTANTIN BRANCUSI

ROBERT PAYNE

He looks, and is, so Chinese that you immediately find yourself looking for the illuminated scrolls on the walls, which appear in every Chinese artist's studio; and then you remember that in the old days the Chinese artists went about untrammelled by possessions, owning only the shapes of things, their meditations, the misty skies and the sound of rivers, the flute-songs and the waving of the heron wings.

It is not only the physical resemblance, which is great enough: a white Chinese beard, a white smock, some kind of skull-cap, sandals, a leather belt, a red face gnarled by the sun and made calm by age, the thick lips pursed as though with every breath he was absorbing the beauty around him, the beauty he had made with his own hands. It is not customary any longer to speak of a man's beauty, but there is no other way in which to describe Brancusi as he approaches seventy, retired from the world, having made perhaps the last of his sculptures, content now to know that he has left his ineffaceable traces on men's thoughts and on the way we see the world; for, having seen one of Brancusi's birds, one can never again see a hovering bird in the old way. It has happened, as he knew it would happen. Nearly all the great museums of the world have his sculptures: those symbolic tortoises —it was a tortoise that first brought the carved Chinese characters from the bottom of the Yellow River—those swans and soaring larks and sleeping faces and columns of doves.

The bell rang outside the great square



BIRD IN SPACE:
A flight into the sky

FISH: *Movement and grace*

studio in the Impasse Roncin, a road famous in French history because it was here that there lived a woman who murdered her husband to make a President her lover. There is no sign of the past in the little garden: a girl washes clothes, sweeping back her hair as she bends over the tub, and there are some half-carved stones among the flowering weeds. There is a long pause. You hear the bell echoing inside the studio. You know he is old and hard of hearing, and sometimes has no desire to receive visitors. And then at last he comes, and there is on the old red face the smile of a young child; and immediately, almost before you have entered the great barn-like studio, he motions to you to keep still while, like a conjuror performing with finesse the first of a series of conjuring tricks, he switches on the current which makes the turn-table revolve, and on this turn-table, gliding rather than revolving, there moves the polished bronze statue he calls *Leda*, though you are conscious rather of the presence of a golden swan. This small, slight, revolving figure takes its life from the reflections of the room, swims towards you and then moves away; is there and is not; reflects you and splinters your reflection among the innumerable other reflections; and for Brancusi himself this golden swan is like a child's toy for, as it glides within its white lake, he is superbly content to watch it, and almost you feel that he, too, has seen it for the first time.

There, too, standing against the wall, are the towering birds for which he is most famous, in blue stone or polished brass. A fish, in blue slate-coloured stone, also revolves; and if its shape reminds you of the flint axe-heads of our ancestors, you are also conscious of the immense residual strength within the strangely carved stone, its power as it turns for ever on a spindle. And behind these rise the white dove columns of wood, moving into endless height, and all round the room there are still more birds and fishes, so that you feel you are in a forest where only birds and fishes remain. It is all light and the beating of wings. Under dust-covers, to protect them from oxidation, there are superb shapes which resemble eggs, but are not eggs, shapes conjured out of brass and marble to suggest the stirring of life. And then, comparing them, you realise that Brancusi has dedicated himself to origins and ends, and for him the bird in the egg and the bird in the fullness of flight are not strangers to one another. He has made, too, many portraits of women so stylised that they resemble birds; only the head of the Sleeping Muse, a head without any body, with faint blue shadows for eyes and small sleeping lips, seems among his portraits to exist in its own right, and this precisely because it is not a portrait taken from life. The head lies there like an egg in a nest; you know that, when you put your hand to it, it will be warm and stirring with life.

THERE are always mysteries in a sculptor's studio: a juxtaposition, a beam of light, the shadow you make yourself as you pass—all these possess the power of evocation. A painting will sometimes spring to violent life when it is framed. So it is with that carving of the Sleeping Muse for, without the least deliberation, Brancusi has placed above it the most splendid of his birds in full flight, a bird in light blue stone with wavy white markings, and behind it he has placed blue chalked paper, so that the bird seems to be all birds soaring into all skies; and seems, too, to be rising from the head of the Sleeping Muse below.

We had wandered freely round the studio. Sometimes Brancusi would snatch off a dust-cover, revealing an egg, a portrait, a tortoise made of wood, and almost hidden away there were some sketches. I asked if he had made many drawings. He pulled on his

cigarette, and shrugged his shoulders. 'Why draw?' he said. 'There are too many lines. In the Middle Ages there was only one line. When a man set about decorating a missal, his line was known from the beginning. Religion told him what to draw: he merely outlined his religious feeling, and in this way he produced great art. But we have no religion any more. We have to go back to the simplest things—the shapes of birds, fishes, columns—and it is hard to go back to these beginnings.'

He went on: 'The tradition was broken in the Renaissance. There was Giotto, for whom I have the greatest reverence, and then there came the tyrants like Michelangelo, who drew without religion and even without feeling for the reverence of life. I have seen the Sistine Chapel. It is like a butcher's shop. What is needed is the fluidity, the strength and the adoration of the line.'

As he stood leaning against the wood-burning stove, a cracked mirror behind him and a small picture of four triangular white clouds to one side of him, he looked so much like the Chinese painters I have known that I asked whether he had travelled in the East. It was not that his birds resembled Chinese birds, for they did not; but all the spirit that informed them seemed to come from the ancient Chinese past. Then the stubby, blackened fingers made a gesture of annoyance. 'Why should I travel in the East?' he said. 'I have been once to India for a fortnight, to build something for a Maharajah's palace. I spent two days in Egypt. I saw the pyramids and the Cairo museum, and that was enough—enough to think about for the rest of one's life. It does not matter where you go. Just because one is alive, it should be possible to produce great art—anywhere. Watch a bird. Watch anything that lives or breathes. People have forgotten to reverence life.' The voice was still calm and without bitterness when he said: 'The worst fault is virtuosity. When I was a student, and when I knew that I could make one portrait a day—not a passable portrait, but a very good portrait—then I knew that I was not an artist. One must spend years on one's compositions. One must discover all the strength, all the grace and all the beauty that is possible. Those who are afflicted with virtuosity kill the tree, kill the marble; and these things must not be killed. And even canvas must not be killed. There are so many canvases more beautiful than the paintings painted on them. One must still go to the schools. It is useless to start sculpture without knowing the movements, but once you have learned the movements, then the dangers begin. Art is not the performance of the appropriate movements; it is not knowing how to swim; it is swimming to the point where you become the whole sea.'

HEAD: *Sleep and rest*

He said: 'Now at last I think they are beginning to understand me. It has taken a long time—much suffering, much poverty. They say I am a recluse now, but in the past I had my own share of *bêtises*, and lived in the world. I got drunk and played with women. All that is useful. One must do these things in order to understand the world. There are some who, when they are thrown into the water, search for something to hold. For a long while I was like that. Now that I have found what I wanted, it makes no difference what people say of me. What is the use of criticism?' He pointed to a little yellow-covered magazine which had recently published an article on him, with his own photographs. 'Why write? Why not just show the photographs? What good are words compared with the thing seen?' He went on: 'I have never read the criticism made about me. Discussions—yes, that is something altogether different. In the old

THE GOLDEN BIRD: *A fountain of light*

days there were long discussions with Ezra Pound, and he was perhaps the first and the best to understand my work. But what use is understanding? I am, I exist, and therefore I must search for beauty, and there is nothing else.' It was almost the Buddhist statement of eternal aims. He smiled: 'I have my three certificates. They certify I am a sculptor, but when I received the certificates I knew nothing at all about the art—I knew only the movements.'

THE golden swan was still revolving on her turn-table. He spoke again for a little while of his admiration for the *portail royal* of Chartres, his hatred of the high Renaissance, where the self in its toils expressed itself, and all the vivid movements of nature were sacrificed to the adornment of the self. 'But the self is not the important thing—the important thing is to know the beauty of the world.' It was as simple, and as childish as that, but on the subject of art, he would never once leave that exalted conception of the artist as the child. 'We must know, as children know. There was no childhood in the mind of Michelangelo.' It was as though he was waging perpetual war against the Sistine Chapel. He was growing old now. To his astonishment, he found himself coughing during the winter; he didn't want to die. So much remained unfinished. He showed us photographs of the columns he had designed long ago for a lake in Roumania, but there were other columns to be erected; there were even plans for a whole palace, or a temple. Then he said: 'You say I am Chinese, and perhaps that is true; but only because I feel as the Chinese feel, and we have the same ends. I shall never go there. Only I know they have produced the kind of art I admire.'

He said this very sadly, as though deliberately stating, deprived of emotion by the urgency of his attack against the Renaissance, the thing that was closest to him. He was content with himself. He had only to look round the studio, where cigarette-stubs littered the floor, to see wild birds in their flight, fishes swimming, Leda eternally wrestling with her swan; a man who had progressed along a singularly accurate line, not turning aside, like Picasso, at every breath of new fancy, but moving as birds fly, directly, without equivocation. It was a studio where one could live for ever in the calm of contemplation. For him the birds took off, poised on the branch, settled and flew across the snowy skies in the same moment of time; the fishes slept, hunted, floated and swam, all in the same moment; and always the Sleeping Muse awakened from her sleep and fell into a trance—the trance from which the world began.

It was so enviable a studio that we delayed a little longer, happy to be there, though the dusk was coming on. One detected, as the time went on, something faun-like in him; there was no cruelty, but a kind of gentle malice in his continual attacks on the Renaissance. He had known the way; it was simpler than anyone had thought possible, as simple as those birds which stretched their wings for flight. He was the Chinese artist of the T'ang Dynasty, but he was also the Roumanian peasant, with a thumb in his leather waist-band, and I remember how once his voice rose with passion when I had said something about the absence of sensuality in his line. 'You are wrong. There is all the sensuality possible in the curved lines of my birds. And you are wrong, too, when you say it is unnecessary to give names to my carvings, for everything must be named.' There was stubbornness and a kind of defiance: though his sculptures are in so many museums, I think he has lost hope that the world will accept his vision. There is a sense in which his vision could not be simpler, or more complicated. As he came to the door, he said: 'You see, it is impossible to create great art unless one loves all the movements and forms of life.' The last we saw of him was when he stood by the door. Behind him rose the columns of towering white doves in full flight. In front of us lay the grey mistiness of Paris at dusk, and we envied him all the more, for Paris, however beautiful, seemed only a pale reflection of the ideal world he had created with his own hands.

FAMOUS LETTERS—3

SHORTLY before Lawrence died in May 1935, a News Agency asked Robert Graves to prepare an obituary of Lawrence of Arabia. Mr. Graves took the unusual step of asking Lawrence himself to supply the necessary information, and the latter readily complied in a letter to Mr. Graves. This remarkable document, with its strange admission of defeat, and obviously written with the consciousness that his life's work had been completed, was published on 20 May 1935, the day after Lawrence's death. With permission of the Evening Standard *(in which paper it appeared) and Mr. Graves, we here print that part of the Epitaph in which T. E. Lawrence, one of the most elusive personalities of our time, renounces his own individuality.*

IF you do supply the obituary, don't give too much importance to what I did in Arabia during the war. I feel that the Middle Eastern settlement put through by Winston Churchill and Young and me in 1921 (which still stands in every particular . . . if only the other Peace Treaties did!) should weigh more than the fighting.

And I feel too that this settlement should weigh less than my life since 1922, for the conquest of the last element, the air, seems to me the only major task of our generation; and I have convinced myself that progress today is made not by the single genius but by the many others. . .

All this is not to glorify myself, but to explain; and here enters my last subject for this letter, your remarks on the changes I have made in myself since the time we felt so much together at Oxford after the war.

You're quite right about the change. I was then trying to write; to be perhaps an artist (for my long account of the Arab revolt had pretentions towards design, and was written with great pains as studied prose), or to be at least cerebral. My head was aiming to create intangible things. That's not well put: all creation is tangible.

What I was trying to do, I suppose, was to carry a superstructure of ideas upon or above anything I made.

Well, I failed in that. By measuring myself against the people who really would write or really could paint, I knew that I was not made out of the same stuff.

Artists (to use the word in its larger sense) excite and attract me—seduce me from what I am. Almost I could be an artist, but there is some sort of core in me that puts on the brake. If I knew what it was I would tell you or become one of the real ones. Only I can't.

When I made this discovery, I changed direction, right, and went into the R.A.F. after straightening out that Eastern tangle with Winston, a duty that fell to me, I having been partly the cause of the tangle. How well the Middle East has done; it, more than any part of the world, has gained from the War.

However, as I said, I went into the R.A.F. to serve a mechanical purpose, not as leader but as a cog of the machine.

The key word, I think, is machine. I have been mechanical since, and a good mechanic, for my self training to become an artist had greatly widened my field of view. I leave it to others to say whether I chose well or not: one of the benefits of being part of the machine is that one learns that one doesn't matter.

One thing more. You remember me writing to you when I first went into the R.A.F. that it was the nearest modern equivalent to going into a monastery in the Middle Ages. That was right in more than one sense.

Being a mechanic cuts one off from all communication with women. No woman, I believe, can understand a mechanic's happiness in serving his bits and pieces.

3

The World of Books

AN INDIAN PHILOSOPHER: SRI AUROBINDO

REV. E. F. F. HILL

Aurobindo is the greatest contemporary Indian philosopher and great in the company of the greatest mystics of all time. There is a rude shock in store for those who, like Leonard Woolf, confuse mysticism with mystification, spiritual experience with decadence and dismiss it as 'quack quack'; for there is mystification and decadence and very much quackery, but not where they would wish to place it. And his psychological insight is so sharp and clear, and the universe which it explores is so vast that, in comparison, Western psychology, even the work of Freud, when one allows in full the measure of its greatness, is like the groping of a child in the dark. The work of Aurobindo compels, not comparison, but concordance with the Fourth Gospel. Here are two men, peers in their own right in the realm of highest knowledge, and peers in relation to each other. Separated by twenty centuries, drawing their sustenance from different cultures but their inspiration from one spiritual source, 'ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free', is one common aspect of their message.

An accomplished scholar in Bengali, Sanskrit, Greek, English, French and Italian, Aurobindo has an exact knowledge and a profound understanding of the thought and feeling of both East and West, which informs not only his metaphysical and his social and political writing, but also, in a charming and intimate way, his letters. It is not surprising that, while to many of his countrymen he is the greatest single influence in the recovery of the great soul and spirit, 'the living embodiment of all the past spiritual achievement of India (and) also the Master-Leader of her future spiritual destiny', his originality is, at the same time, seen to lie in the way in which he has created a synthesis between this past spiritual achievement and modern European thought, so that the future spiritual destiny of India and the future destiny of Europe are inescapably the same destiny.

We are at a turning-point in the spiritual history of man. Aurobindo is the embodiment of a revolution in human life which new knowledge, new powers, new capacities, are creating at this hour. We must know what these powers, capacities and knowledge are. We must see that they are instruments. All that I have indicated so far, his metaphysical knowledge, his spirituality, his political wisdom, his psychological acumen, even the fact that Aurobindo is the embodiment of what he is the embodiment, is superficial and may be safely tucked away in some mental or ethical or religious pigeon-hole, if it is not seen that these are but instruments and have only an instrumental use. Even the revolution in human life is an instrument.

We must ask a basic question. Its obvious form—whose, and for what purpose, are these instruments?—is not, at this stage, sufficiently concrete. We are concerned to ask: what is happening to the world because Aurobindo is living in it? If this should seem

to some arbitrary, and to others fantastic, yet it is this question which his work, not only his writing, but his integral Yoga, compels; and compels, not of him alone, but of everyone and of everything which is in the world, even of the least significant man and the least significant thing, even of inconscient matter. It is this that we must bring forward, that we may see it as in itself it really is. It is implicit in the account which he has given, particularly in his *Letters*,[1] of the aim of his integral Yoga, and this can best be set out in his own words:

'Life, not a remote, silent or high-uplifted static beyond—Life alone is the field of our Yoga. The transformation of our superficial, narrow and fragmentary human way of thinking, seeing, feeling and being into a deep and wide spiritual consciousness and an integrated inner and outer existence, and of our ordinary human living into the divine way of life must be its central purpose. The means towards this supreme end is a self-giving of all our nature to the Divine.

'To become aware of and liberate and transform and unite all the being in the light of a Truth-consciousness which is above and cannot be reached if there is no entirely inward-going and no transcending and upward-going movement.

'To reach, manifest, embody a higher consciousness upon earth and not get away from earth into a higher world or some supreme Absolute. Here and not elsewhere, not by going to some other world, the divine realisation must come.

'Integral Yoga cannot afford to leave unsolved the problem of the outward works of life; it must find in them their native Divinity and ally it firmly and for ever to the divinities of Love and Knowledge.

'Peace must be ours, but not the peace of an empty or devastated nature or of slain or mutilated capacities incapable of unrest because we have made them incapable of intensity and fire and force. Purity must be our aim, but not the purity of a void or a bleak and rigid coldness. Perfection is demanded of us, but not the perfection that can exist only by confining its scope within narrow limits or putting an arbitrary full stop to the ever self-extending scroll of the Infinite. Our object is to change into the divine nature, but the divine nature is not a mental or moral but a spiritual condition, difficult to achieve, difficult even to conceive by our intelligence.'

The metaphysical intuition which supports this discipline is expounded with great imaginative power in *The Synthesis of Yoga*.[2] At the risk of misplaced emphasis, we must limit ourselves to a few broad features of it, which will serve to make precise the meaning of the above quotations. Aurobindo is a master of precise statement. Moreover, vision and action are so fused in him that we may say that he is what he sees.

Its fundamental feature is the perception that Unity is the eternal truth of things. In the One all things consist. One equal Soul (*Purusha*) is in all things; were it not so, the Many would be unreal. The Many is the diverse self-expression of the One; were it not so, 'Unity would be either a void of non-existence or a sterile limitation to the state of indiscriminate self-absorption.' Hence, a progressive sense of the Divine in all things and the birth of a universal love for all beings and a Divine work in the world is possible. 'The eternal Self can be met in its completeness in each soul or each form in the universe. The knowledge of it can begin anywhere and express itself through anything.' It becomes the highest law of our being to know and to feel all of which we are or can be conscious as that which we worship and serve.

But the Self who is all things, exceeds all things. Here I quote, for the orthodox finger will be swift to write *pantheism* where there is no pantheism: 'The world and the Divine are not one and the same thing. The world depends upon something that manifests in it but is not limited by it. There is a beyond, an eternal Transcendence . . . A Transcendent who is beyond all world and all Nature and yet possesses the world and its nature, who has descended with something of itself into the world and is shaping it into that which as yet it is not, is the Source of

[1] *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (Second Series). Pub.: Sri Aurobindo Circle, Bombay. Rs. 8 (16s.): *More Lights on Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Rs. 3 (6s.). (These may be obtained from John M. Watkins, 21 Cecil Court, Charing Cross Road, W.C.2.) [2] *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo, Pub.: Sri Aurobindo. Library, Madras. Rs. 7/8 (15s.)

our being, of our works and their Master.'

Again, it is by its double power of being and becoming that all manifestation of the Self proceeds. The Self, the Divine, is in Nature and out of Nature; it moves in the movement of the manifestation and is above the movement. It is in the consciousness of multiplicity and in the consciousness of unity. This twin consciousness, taken as a single energy of its self-being to produce itself, is Knowledge. But, given separation and we have Ignorance.

Ignorance is the separative consciousness which identifies itself with the object in the movement of manifestation, and the egoistic mind, heart and life which follow from it. That which manifests, the Self, the Source of mind, heart and life is subordinated to the object and its limitations or excluded altogether.

'It is the result of a movement by which the cosmic Intelligence separated itself from the light of the Supermind and lost the Truth. So instead of a world of integral truth and divine harmony created in the light of the divine Gnosis, we have a world founded on the past truths of an inferior cosmic Intelligence. . . . Falsehood is not Ignorance but an extreme result of it. It is created by an anti-Divine (*Asuric*) power which intervenes in the creation and is not only separated from the Truth and therefore limited in knowledge and open to error, but is in revolt against the Truth or in the habit of seizing the Truth only to pervert it.'

The movement of this dark Power in Mind, and in all the modes of Nature, conceives of itself as a separate, independent existence, torn from the Cosmos and equal and, at times, superior to it. 'The result of this separation is the inability to enter into harmony and oneness with the universe and a consequent inability to enjoy it. But the desire to possess and enjoy, which is still the master desire of the Ego. It cannot, because of its limitations, realise its true existence. Therefore the ignorance in which it views its limitations must be overcome.'

There must be a new consciousness, a new perception of unity, a 'transformation of life in its very principle'. And transformation, which is a bringing down of the divine Consciousness into every part of being, even into matter, is effected through the sacrifice of love, works and knowledge.

The true essence of sacrifice is not expressed in any form of self-denial or of physical rejection; it is not self-immolation, but self-giving; its object is not self-effacement but self-fulfilment, the bringing forward of the hidden Soul (*Purusha*); its method is the shifting of the centre of vision from the limited mind and heart and life of Ignorance to the light of the knowledge of the Divine. Its essence is the replacement of delight in the object of desire by the inner offering of the heart's adoration fulfilled in Love. Knowledge is love. Ignorance is passion: blind, full of discord, the passion of unsatisfied desire.

The Law of Sacrifice is the symbol of the power of the presence of the One in the Many, of the Unity of the Universe. The acceptance of the law is the recognition by the Ego that it is neither alone nor chief in the world, that it is not for itself, that beyond and behind it there is something greater which demands its service.

The perfection of man is in the full manifestation of the Divine in the individual through the supreme accord between multiplicity and oneness; in him, multiplicity must become conscious of its Oneness and Oneness must embrace and support its multiplicity and diversity. In him, life must be changed into worship and worship fulfilled in Love. This is his destiny. The divine Nature must be manifested in the individual —he himself must realise it—in order that it may manifest in the world on its behalf.

The instruments of which we spoke in the beginning are the perfected instruments of the Divine, both static and dynamic. Because Aurobindo is in the world, the world is becoming able to express progressively Unity and Diversity instead of Division, Love instead of Hatred, Truth-consciousness instead of Falsehood, Freedom instead of Tyranny, Immortality instead of Death; it is becoming progressively that which it is: a movement of the Spirit in itself.

CAN PARLIAMENT SURVIVE?

By Christopher Hollis, M.P. *Hollis & Carter*. 9s.

Reviewed by Bertrand de Jouvenel

Britain is governed by a Cabinet, the spear-head of a Party, which has, in a General Election, won a relative majority of votes. Subordinate officers of the Party sit in Parliament where they faithfully enact into legislation the measures introduced by their leaders. Such measures are a blend between what appears desirable to a small active minority of the Party, Party aristocracy, and what appears necessary or possible to the permanent managers of the various State departments, Administrative aristocracy.

Such is the actual situation, very different from that described in text-books on Constitutional Law. And to this situation, Mr. Christopher Hollis addresses himself in a penetrating book.

He makes it clear that this is not Parliamentary Government. 'The member is the obedient servant of the party machine. He tramps into the division lobby, voting for or against he knows not what, on subjects upon which as a general rule no opinion save that of the specialist is of the least value.' Departure from discipline involves a risk, and Mr. Hollis underlines the social reasons which make the average member unwilling to venture his seat from which he draws his status. But men will run far greater risks in obedience to their convictions. The further, and greater, difficulty lies in this, that the matters discussed are such that the individual member cannot easily form an individual opinion and is then prone to take on trust whatever happens to be offered by his leaders, so long as they retain his confidence by their attitude in general. Thus Parliamentary control in fact vanishes, and, indeed, any close attention to a difficult subject is precluded by the ceaseless stream of proposed legislation. Such is this stream that it narrows down the time for debate, as well as for study.

'The nineteenth-century Parliament was able to preserve its freedom of debate because it only attempted to control a very small portion of the national life. . . . The matters which were the subject of legislation were matters upon which any educated man can form an opinion.'

These are good points, and Mr. Hollis has performed a great service in underlining the unfortunate swamping of Parliament. The sheer number of decisions which come to be necessary when public authorities control most of national life, and the technical character of such decisions in a modern industrial society, overtax the capacity of a body devised for a much lighter function.

It follows that Parliament is being pushed into a position somewhat similar to that of the Monarchy: a formal and passive author of decisions taken elsewhere, valuable as a great moral asset rather than as a working mechanism.

Mr. Hollis makes the reader conscious of the pressing need for a descriptive study of how Western democracies are in fact governed. How many memoranda circulated, and conferences held by representatives of Government departments and Boards before a decision is reached which thereafter will be rubber-stamped by the responsible Minister and the responsible Parliament! All this goes on behind closed doors, in secret, and the press has no cognizance of it. Whether this state of affairs is quite democratic, I would not venture to say.

In fact, it would seem democratic to keep the public informed of discussions at the level on which they are meaningful, that is, at the administrative level, and not only at the level on which they are, or tend to be, merely formal, that is in the House.

The shifting of actual policy-making from one social locus to another is surely the political phenomenon *par excellence*, and Mr. Hollis has here introduced a great subject, which should command attention not only in England.

However interesting the discussion by Mr. Hollis on Capitalism and Socialism may be, I cannot but regret that the whole book was not focused on the major theme. It was worthy of a whole volume, and, indeed, of others which are to be expected from the author.

INTRODUCTION TO EXISTENTIALISM

Translated by Eric Blow: Existentialist Philosophies: An Introduction. By Emmanuel Mounier. *Rockliff*. 15s.

Reviewed by Leslie Paul

The great achievement of this short study is that we learn from it the extent of the common ground between Heidegger, Sartre, Jaspers, Marcel and others, as well as the area of conflict. Mounier builds up an impressive ancestry for Existentialism, tracing it back to Socrates, the Stoics, and St. Augustine, but this part of his study is mostly a gesture to orthodox philosophy formulated in the spirit which compels the shaky usurper to a throne to prove that his lineage is the most ancient of all. The real Existentialist spirit begins with Pascal and Kierkegaard, in a Christian anxiety, in a sense of the nothingness of man in the cosmos, or his nullity before God. A sense of the peril and despair of the human person could develop in its fullness only when man came face to face with philosophical systematisations of the greatest grandeur, which neglected, excluded, or even denied, human existence. 'Philosophers,' Mounier writes, 'in league with scientists, are bent on ridding the world of man's presence . . . they felt annoyed even by existence because it was a vague and shameful survival of man's presence. They then set to work to create a world composed purely of matter . . .' which was nothing more than 'pure hypothesis'. The recoil from this absurdity was a rediscovery of man's inwardness.

Mounier makes clear that the school of Heidegger and Sartre, that is, of extreme atheistical Existentialism, has developed the Kierkegaardian recoil to the point of acceptance of 'nothingness'. Man is unwanted; he is surrounded by nothingness; he is a kind of crack of nothingness in the great doughy mass of being; he knows only himself, and his existence is no more than a reflection of a reflection. So far, indeed, has this negation gone, that Mounier exclaims that it is paradoxical to describe it as Existentialist at all. 'It would really be more apposite to speak of it as non-Existentialism.' On the other

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JOHN MURRAY

hand, neither Marcel nor Jaspers, who belong to what he calls the 'Existentialist Existentialists', develop the despairing and abandoned view of man which belongs to Sartre. Though they accept the view that existence is a solitude, yet it is not absolute nothingness. It is only a nothingness by contrast to a something, a Being. The nothingness that man feels is in a sense the sign of the presence of Absolute Being. So, even as for Kierkegaard, man's existence is not abandoned. It is existence in the sight of God, or in the sight of Being, or before another person. Instead of hopelessness and despair, Marcel and Jaspers postulate existence as a kind of gushing forth of energy, a struggle for hope, an invocation of that which is beyond man's own existence.

Although he is too modest to mention it, Mounier is himself the founder of a school of Existentialism, which he calls Personalism, and which stands in the point of 'doctrine' between Jaspers and Marcel. The most searching and original chapter in the book deals with precisely that which distinguishes Marcel and Mounier from Sartre.

This book must raise once again for all who read it the central dilemma of Existentialism—is it a philosophy which can be communicated, or must it degenerate, as more than once the author feels that it is doing, into 'mere gibberish'? The hostility of Existentialism to systematisation prevents the careful definition of concepts, or the elimination of contradictions. Indeed, sometimes it seems that nothing more is feared than any kind of clarification—'We must be on the look-out for those who come forward at this stage with pious zeal to clear the dead wood', the author says. But if there is a truth independent of the personal and solitary existence, and there cannot be Being or God without such an independent truth, then somehow that truth must be generally expressible and communicable. At present Existentialism is busy having its cake and eating it: it is raising cries of horror against systems and concepts, but it is also busy, through a group of powerful writers, communicating the incommunicable truth by means of just these things.

THE PARADOX OF OSCAR WILDE
By George Woodcock. *T. V. Boardman & Co.* 15s.

Reviewed by Stephen Winsten

Chekhov often said it was a pity that Tolstoy had no Eckermann to note the sharp unexpected and often mutually contradictory thoughts of the old sage, and the author of *The Paradox of Oscar Wilde* regrets that Wilde's conversation remained unreported. In both instances we have to content ourselves with fragmentary accounts, often highly coloured, by the persons who gave them. Oscar Wilde was undoubtedly a greater talker than writer and the testing time came when he was forced to stay for two years in a place where talking was strictly forbidden. The most moving passage in the whole book is the account of a conversation in prison:

'. . . Those who are in prison for the first time are spotted at once, because they do not know how to speak without moving their lips. I had already been in prison six weeks and I had not spoken a word to anyone—not to a soul. One evening we were walking as usual, one behind the other, during the hour's exercise, when suddenly behind me I heard my name called. "Oscar Wilde, I pity you because you must suffer more than we do." Then I made a great effort not to be noticed (I thought I was going to faint), and I said without turning round, "No, my friend, we all suffer alike." And from that day I no longer had a desire to kill myself. . .'

Something had entered his heart which made him see life in a new light: it was Pity. Until then this marvellous raconteur was essentially an entertainer, forgetting what he said the moment it was uttered, but now words came to him more slowly, but they were from the heart. Read his letter to the *Daily Chronicle* about the dismissal of a warder who was extremely kind and human: 'Kind words are much in prison, and a pleasant "Good-morning" or "Good evening" will make one as happy as one can be in prison.' Small wonder we learn that in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* he anticipated the whole of Tolstoy's message in his

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last pamphlets. It is a great pity that they never met. I can imagine a conversation on the decay of lying:

Tolstoy: We are all dreadfully prone to invention. I myself am just the same; sometimes as I am writing, I begin to be sorry for some character and I put in some little trait to make him seem better, and then I take away some bad traits from another so as not to make him look too black compared with the other. That is why I say that all art is lies and that it is bad for people.

Oscar Wilde: Lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of Art.

Tolstoy: You, the creator of beauty, are you not ashamed? Still, I hear you are the perfect raconteur, come tell me a story . . .

This is an intriguing book: it makes a brave attempt to reconcile the obvious contradictions in the life and thought of the subject, the man who wrote *Dorian Gray* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, *Salome* and *De Profundis*, *An Ideal Husband* and *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*. He thinks that the most just of all the brief estimates of Wilde's stature is that of Charles Ricketts: 'In intellect and humanity he is the largest type I have come across. Other greater men in my time were great in some one thing, not large in their very texture.' It is this contradictory element which is the very source of great art and the artist who resolves it ceases to create. The point at issue is whether the flashy wit was a cover to this inward struggle, whether the gay frontage hid a thinking soul. His comedic nonsense marked his contempt for the society that adored him as a clown and ignored him as a social critic. Because he enjoyed being adored, he became master of nonsense and slave of sense.

The author contends that he was a liberating influence in his struggle against outworn convention, but it was only after he had learned to speak simply and sincerely that his real voice was heard. 'Yet in this very tomb of infamy he gained the experience that was to impel him to speak once again to the world, this time with all his latent earnestness, in the name of all men crushed under the pitiless heel of authority.' What other example is there of such a transformation?

In an age when adoration and denigration follow in cycles, when a portrait is done in tar or whitewash according to the mood of the author or the current fashion, it is refreshing to come across a book that faces up to all the problems involved and can place things in proper perspective. I am glad the author has not omitted aspects of Oscar Wilde's character overlooked by other biographers. When someone once embarked on the thankless task of attempting to get signatures of well-known English writers and other public figures to a petition for the reprieve of the Chicago anarchists, now known as the Chicago Martyrs, there was only one of them who had sufficiently the courage of his convictions to make a public gesture on behalf of these men. It was a completely disinterested act on Wilde's part. Further, when we are reflecting on his morality, let it not be forgotten that he was incapable of a vulgar or a suggestive joke, that people who were depressed when they encountered him went away imbued with a happy optimism; his conversation, in fact 'relieved people of severe nervous pains or charmed the apparently inconsolably bereaved into the state of mind where they could loosen their sorrows in laughter.' Even in prison, the Home Office representatives, peering through a spy-hole in the hospital ward, saw Wilde sitting on his bed and keeping his fellow prisoners in paroxysms of laughter with his stories. It is difficult to express what spiritual courage such an act demanded. I have met one of the warders who was in charge of his ward and he bore testimony to Wilde's humour and courage. Though the telling of stories was natural to him, I have no doubt that he did it in the hospital ward to cheer the dejected and to turn despair into hope. It was a religious urge. As Wilde told Gide:

'I have learned now that pity is the greatest and most beautiful thing in the world, and that is why I cannot bear ill-will towards those who caused my suffering and those who condemned me; no, nor to anyone, because without them I should not have known all that.'

TWO WOMEN WRITERS

Radclyffe Hall: Adam's Breed: *Falcon Press.* 12s. 6d.

Ivy Compton-Burnett: Two Worlds and Their Ways: *Gollancz.* 10s. 6d.

Reviewed by Olivia Manning

Miss Radclyffe Hall and Miss Compton-Burnett are, I suppose, contemporaries, but if ten centuries separated them, their writing could not have less in common. Miss Hall is very much of her Age—the romantic '20s—while Miss Compton-Burnett's work is limited by no period or fashion.

Miss Hall's novels are now, some twenty odd years after publication, being reprinted in an expensive uniform edition. I doubt whether this fact will be sufficient to establish her as a classic; rather is a re-reading likely to confirm those who read her works in childhood in the suspicion that she was a very over-rated writer. It might seem, on the face of it, that her story of Gian-Luca, the Italian bastard who tries to get his own back on life by making a fortune and is instead destroyed by his hyper-sensitivity, would be closer to the world we know than one of Miss Compton-Burnett's variations on her Victorian family theme. In fact, the reverse is true. Miss Compton-Burnett is a realist of the highest order; she is uncompromising in her revelation of hypocrisy at all levels, of emotions, motives and desires; her human beings are as old as civilisation; I doubt if they will ever die. Miss Hall, on the other hand, is a shameless sentimentalist. The world of *Adam's Breed* resembles nothing so much as that presented on the screen at the local Odeon. It is, however, the high-brow Hollywood, for the story is a sad one; there is no happy ending and the fumble for pocket-handkerchiefs can be heard throughout. Miss Compton-Burnett regards her characters with an all-seeing compassion. Miss Hall slops hers over with pity (strongly flavoured with self-pity) until they are sodden out of shape. A few lines from the death scene of Gian-Luca's grandfather will give an idea of her method:

'But one day in October, the God of his lumbago drew nearer, becoming the God of his soul; and Fabio's old knees gave under him, and his head fell forward and lay upon the table, and his cheek lay buried deep in the flour that his weak hands had failed to mix . . . He had little enough to tell of himself, now that he must face St. Peter at the Gate—but perhaps he said: "I tried to make pasta—I did try very hard to make pasta—"'

Gian-Luca begins by doing well as a waiter, but he is, without knowing it, the son of a poet; the sufferings of animals and his fellow-men become more than he can bear. Among the objects of his pity is Jane Coram, a character who, unlike the others, appears to have been drawn from life. She is one of the exhibitionists of the 'lost generation' and has, we are repeatedly told by the author, 'the eyes of a home-sick monkey'. We have seen this Jane Coram, eyes and all, among the pathetic, drunken wrecks left over from the '20s, but no one else in the book is more than a type. Gian-Luca himself is a romantic fiction and when, in despair at the world, he sets out on a journey 'to find God', he fades completely into the 'poetic' mists of one of the dampest periods in English fiction. His end is typical. A New Forest pony who has become his friend is sold for work in the mines. Despite the fact he could well afford to buy its reprieve, he lets it be led off with no more than a feeble protest, then: 'Gian-Luca threw himself down on the ground, burying his face in his hands, and he spoke to the earth, asking it to show pity. "Let him die, let him die, let him die!" he entreated, as though the earth had ears wherewith to hear, as though it were a mother who must surely feel compassion for the creatures her bounty has nourished.' He accepts his own solution of

the world's ills and lets himself die of starvation. In this death scene Miss Hall plays so ruthlessly upon the susceptibilities of her readers that one might think she has pulled the *vox humana* out of its socket. 'A leaf drifted quietly down and touched him, but Gian-Luca lay very still. Then a rabbit that was scampering over the grass sat up on its haunches, staring. In the beech trees the birds began talking to each other, for now it was the hour of the sunset—

And that was how Gian-Luca returned to his country after thirty-four years of exile.'

The reader will miss much in this scene if he cannot imagine for himself the heavenly choirs that so often bawl a million-dollar production to its close.

The year before Miss Radclyffe Hall was receiving the Femina Vie Heureuse and James Tait Black Memorial Book Prizes for the above, Miss Compton-Burnett published, almost unacclaimed, her second novel, *Pastors and Masters*. A tiny circle of discriminating readers recognised in this work the original creative power that is given only to one or two writers in a generation. Her reputation has grown steadily with the publication of nine more novels and now *Two Worlds and Their Ways*, the twelfth, may lead us to wonder if she has not become too completely mistress within her self-acknowledged limitations to develop further. This book lacks the qualities of tragedy and comedy that made the earlier ones important; it moves rather flatly between the two and its flatness is not compensated for by any particular fineness of construction or detail. The main strand of the story concerns two children, a brother and a sister, who discover in their one term at school that they must cheat to maintain the high standard expected of them by their mother; the secondary strands concern a theft by the mother to compensate her husband for a loss incurred by an error in his past, a similar error in the past of the husband's first wife's father, and the relationship of the second wife to the family of the first. These strands relate to one another well enough but are without the dual pertinence her earlier novels have led us to expect. There is something undigested about this novel that causes one to separate it into its components rather than see it as an indissoluble whole. None of this, however, is to say that *Two Worlds and Their Ways* is an 'easier' novel than its predecessor. The conversations are as intricate and revealing as ever, the characters as subtle in their conception and the demands made upon the reader as great. I believe it was the author herself who said: 'When one picks up an Ivy Compton-Burnett novel it is difficult not to put it down.' To those who have felt 'the fascination of what is difficult', Miss Compton-Burnett gives as much as she demands.

ALL THINGS BETRAY THEE

By Gwyn Thomas. *Michael Joseph*. 10s. 6d.

Reviewed by Henry Treece

The truest art rouses passion because it strikes at man's deepest nature, and so discovers him either aware or wanting. Mere watertight and passionless competence, never greatly censured, or greatly praised, passes untouched to a safe oblivion. This book, unless I am greatly mistaken, will not come off scot-free from the critics; nor do I think that it will soon be forgotten. Both matter and manner should preserve it.

All Things Betray Thee is reminiscent of the story of the rioter, Dic Penderyn, hanged at Cardiff in 1831 for a murder he did not commit. Mr. Thomas sets his scene in South Wales, early in the last century, at Moonlea, 'that smoky sty of a place set in the valley', and overlooked by the ironmaster's pillared mansion. Into this muttering microcosm of philosopher-innkeeper, lecherous truckshopman and rebel-hunting lord, steps a creature from another world, a wandering harpist from North Wales, 'a legate from the goats', seeking an old friend who is now the leader of the valley's rioters against exploitation.

The harpist becomes the Chorus, the Observer, even the fulcrum between Ironmaster, Minister, Lawyer and Soldiers—and the foundry-workers. But a man is killed,

outbreaks of rioting give butcher's sanction to the Yeomanry, and the Chorus is swept into the tragedy's heart, and though innocent is sentenced for murder.

Were this the end, Mr. Thomas might be congratulated as 'Hogarthian' (even 'Rabelaisian', if one recalls his passionate baker whose frigid wife dresses him at nightfall in wickerwork drawers) and 'Picaresque'; but we have yet to bite to the core of a strangely comforting humility, and a peace out of agony that, for me, sets this novel high.

Yet its peculiar quality is not easy to diagnose; at first it seems that a loam-caked character out of Mary Webb has strayed into one of Bennett's Five Towns, there to meet men as tumble-witted and a fate as inevitable as anything in Thomas Hardy. But there is more to it than that; Mr. Thomas is a poet ('She wore a white gown, from which lace gushed.') whose wild intoxication of words is as real and sometimes as savage as blood. It makes his world of industrial reality a dream in which his wandering dreamer is the only real man.

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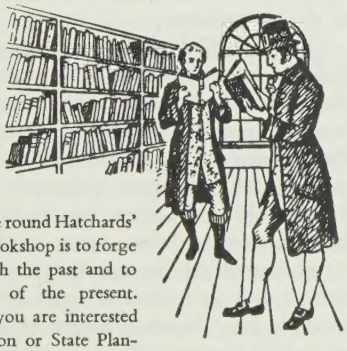

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THE PISAN CANTOS

By Ezra Pound. *Faber & Faber*. 12s. 6d.

Reviewed by Michael Hamburger

Twenty-seven years ago, T. S. Eliot was not guilty of excessive modesty when, in the dedication of *The Waste Land*, he described Ezra Pound as *il miglior fabbro* (the better craftsman); but in view of the subsequent development of the two poets, this compliment is now painfully reminiscent of another controversial dedication, that of Baudelaire's *Fleurs de Mal* to Théophile Gautier, a minor poet who, however excellent a craftsman, lacked the moral insight and the scope of his younger contemporary. As Baudelaire discovered, craftsmanship cannot be judged in itself; it is inseparable from the matter to which it is applied.

Mr. Eliot, no doubt, owes a great deal to the technical innovations, the critical verve and the personal influence of Mr. Pound; at the time when he wrote *The Waste Land*, these served him well. Mr. Eliot was concerned with our spiritual bankruptcy, and Mr. Pound's habit of playing with quotations, of picking up souvenirs of every period and place must have helped to compile his beautiful and formidable reliquary; but Mr. Eliot, successfully, was 'shoring fragments against his ruin.' He was not, as Mr. Pound seems content to do, playing an interminable game of dominoes with ill-assorted bricks.

The game is original, we are told; but the kind of originality in question is outmoded, or ought to be; and perhaps it is time for the word 'original' to be used in a different sense—that of 'first hand', 'inventive', 'creative', rather than 'idiosyncratic', 'unprecented', 'weird'.

The author of such poems as '*E. P. Ode pour l'Election de son Sépulcre*' and '*Na Audiart*' could hardly help occasionally lapsing into eloquence, profundity or beauty of cadence, even in these forbidding Cantos.

Mr. Pound's practice of quoting promiscuously and of referring to remembered incidents in the language or dialect associated with them in his mind have been defended on the grounds that, like Mr. Eliot in *The Waste Land*, he is writing about a disintegrating civilisation; for the same reason it can be objected that each Canto, or even the complete sequence of Cantos, must be judged as a whole and that it is misleading to cite only a few lines. In the case of *The Pisan Cantos*, however, as of several of the earlier Cantos, it is difficult to say what Mr. Pound is writing about. Undoubtedly these poems convey a sense of disintegration and, occasionally, of tragedy; but it is difficult not to attribute these to the author's personal predicament, rather than to a general one. I am not referring only to the unhappy circumstances in which *The Pisan Cantos* were written—Mr. Pound was in an American prison camp—but to the moral and aesthetic impasse into which Mr. Pound has been led by his rigid adherence to literary ideals current at the end of the last century.

Canto LXXXI contains a passage quite different from the rest of these poems; it is direct, coherent and moving, though the language contains a number of archaisms. Perhaps this passage provides the clue to the whole work; perhaps it is that Mr. Pound, in spite of his cleverness, his erudition and his 'modernity', has never understood either himself or his age. In the passage I mean, with its refrain of 'pull down thy vanity', Mr. Pound is aware of his own tragedy at least; and that is one reason why the lines are moving. The simplicity of the language here, in spite of the archaisms, is another. Within their limitations, these lines are genuinely creative and original; for the artist's task is to select some of the seemingly disconnected concepts and images which clutter up his mind, and to reject others.

(*Continued from page 17*)

standard of living of the Russian people today is thirty per cent inferior to what it was in Czarist times. Mr. Max Eastman has shown that there is an inequality of income in Soviet Russia greater than that in the capitalist United States. Any one who had anything to do with Russian troops during the war found life among them intolerable because the class divisions in the Russian army were such as were intolerable to Western standards. Of course there is no unemployment in Russia. Why should you have unemployment if you send to a forced labour camp every one who cannot get a job? Estimates of the number of prisoners in those camps vary somewhat, but there are none that are under eight figures. On the other hand, the capitalist system is in many ways doubtless an unlovely thing, but its one clear achievement has been to raise the standard of the working people. It has raised it in eighty years incomparably more than it has been raised in the whole of previously recorded history.

But to say all this is not of course to say for one instant that the Christian in the West is entitled to be complacent about the West or merely accept Western society as it is. If it is true that we can only fight a weapon with a weapon, it is also true that we can only fight an idea with an idea. Marxian Communism, so far from being an Eastern idea, is a Western idea which Marx himself thought particularly unsuitable to Russia and which only found its home in the East by an historical accident. Marx built up his theory by taking the capitalist economics of Ricardo and arguing—with a good deal of plausibility—that, if that was what capitalism was, then it must inevitably break down. He gave no reason at all why Socialism or Communism or the classless society should take its place. The Christian of course has both the right and the duty to say to the Communist, 'Of course we agree with you that there are grave defects in the Ricardean analysis. But you have not removed those defects. You have magnified them. From the Christian point of view the Ricardean analysis was at fault in that it treated man as if he was in fact a purely economic animal. You have out-Ricardoed Ricardo by defiantly proclaiming that he is not and cannot be anything other than a purely economic animal!'

The Christian must say this to the Communist, and he must also act in the Western capitalist world. Saying is not enough. He must go down into the market-place of that world and say 'It is not sufficient that your industrial system turns out an ever greater abundance of material goods. No system can be considered satisfactory unless it gives to the worker the responsibility of a free man in his work.' Of course industrialism, whether in its capitalist or its communist form, has to only too great an extent been guilty of 'breeding the mass-man', and it is the duty of the Christian to purge industrialism of this great evil and to save man from the great illusion that he solves a problem by merely exchanging Tweedledee for Tweedledum—communism for capitalism —the 'two Siamese twins' of Mr. Peter Drucker's phrase. But the whole religious tradition of the West, in this respect at any rate superior to the religious tradition of the East, whether Christian or non-Christian, is to refuse to say 'The world is a very wicked place. Let us withdraw from it.' Of course it is true that there is much in the West that is unlovely and materialistic and that can by no stretch of imagination be called Christian. But how inexpressibly feeble for the Christian therefore merely to leave it, to wash his hands and to declare his neutrality. That way lies Buddhism and brings us perilously soon to the appalling blasphemy of saying that the world is not worth saving. 'These are they for whom their Omnipotent Creator did not disdain to die.' It is our duty first to take such sane measures of self-defence as shall prevent a war and then, having assured peace without which no problems can be solved, to see to it that we make it a Christian peace—first, as Aristotle would put it, to see to it that Europe lives and then to see to it that she lives well.

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THEOLOGICAL STUDENT

(Continued from page 56)

bread, or drink a glass of wine with a lamb-chop, or eat a bunch of grapes with cheese and crackers?'

'I guess so,' I said and went home.

When I got there, I spent three hours in the backyard, working. My uncle Khosrove sat on the steps of the back porch and watched.

At last he got up and said, 'For the love of God, what is it now? Why are you pestering the life out of that poor old Malaga vine? You have cleaned and repaired it until it looks like the ghost of a wretched old man, and only a moment ago it resembled a handsome, dreaming youth. Matter is beautiful only in its imperfections. Only blockheads seek perfection, which is death. Let perfection seek you. You needn't seek it. Now, go inside the house and sit down and eat half a cold watermelon. You are not perfect, the vine is not perfect, but you can eat watermelon and pass water, so do so.'

'What nonsense,' I thought, but as I ate the watermelon, I wondered if my uncle Khosrove was not just about the best theological student of them all.

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